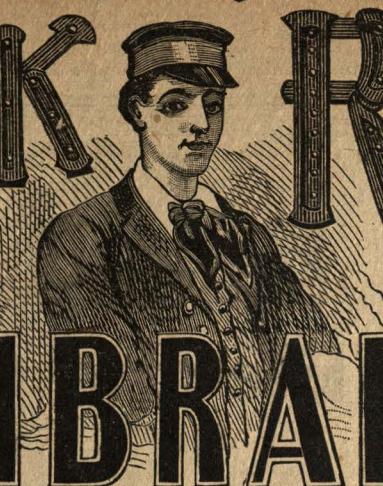


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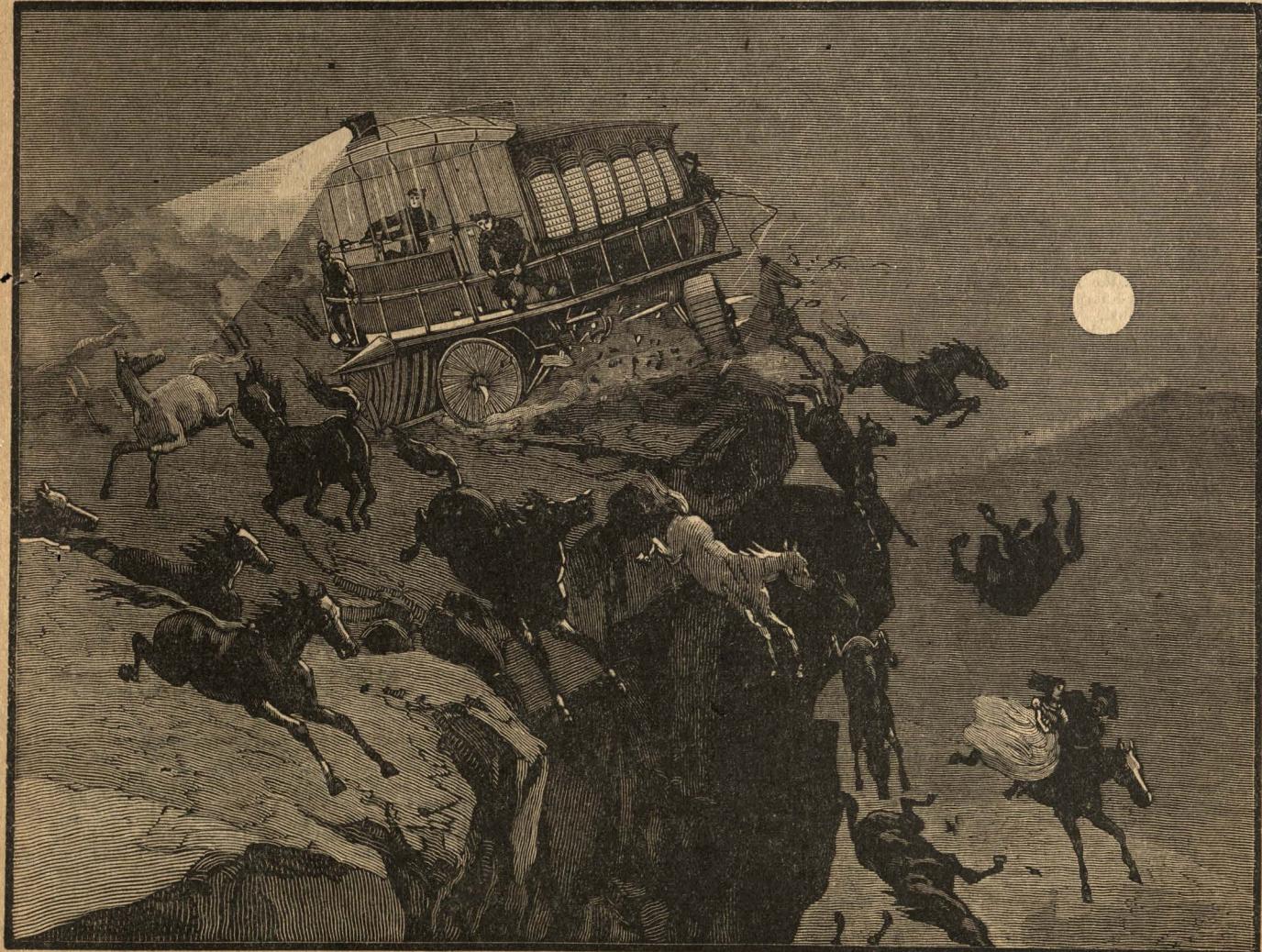
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FRANK READE, JR., AND HIS ELECTRIC COACH; OR, The Search for the Isle of Diamonds.

PART I.

By "Noname."



Up flew the dirt and gravel in showers, under the broad, cogged wheels, as the coach whizzed around, and off she rushed like wildfire, on a line with the cliff tops. A sigh of intense relief burst from every one. For a moment not a soul expected to escape destruction.

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FRANK READE, JR.

And His Electric Coach:

OR,

THE SEARCH FOR THE ISLE OF DIAMONDS.

By "NONAME,"

Author of "Frank Reade, Jr., and His Queen Clipper of the Clouds," etc., etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE STORY OF THE DIAMOND ISLAND.

It was a cold, blustery night in October, a dark, storm-threatening sky lowering over a beautiful western settlement called Readestown, and a sharp wind sweeping across the adjacent prairies with a mournful dirge.

A dusty road, hedged by tall trees, and dense shadowy bushes ran out of the eastern side of the town, illuminated a short distance by electric lights, the power of which came from the dynamos in a building owned by the eldest son of a great inventor, Frank Reade, after whom the town was named.

Frank Reade, Jr., his son, was an enormously rich young married man, who, inheriting his father's wonderful talent, had invented some of the most marvelous contrivances in steam and electricity ever produced by mankind.

On the night in question he had been trying the working and speed of an electrical motor, to run without tracks, in the form of a coach, upon which he had been laboring for over a year, which he had just completed.

It was just about an hour after he had passed along the road alluded to, on his return with the machine, and the clocks in town announced the hour of nine, when a man, looking much like a tramp, might have been seen lurking in the shadow of the bushes, beyond the outskirts of Readestown.

His actions were highly mysterious.

He would glance cautiously up and down the road, as if secretly expecting to see some one, and upon being disappointed, he skulked back in the gloom again.

The man was alone, and had the air of a person who was anxious to conceal his presence there from any chance wayfarer, and at the same time he seemed to be greatly under the influence of liquor.

It was in a particularly dark spot where he had taken up his station. Any one in passing could scarcely have distinguished his form from the dark bushes in back of him.

He heard footsteps coming presently, but by that time he was so overcome by the liquor he drank that he reeled out in the wagon ruts, as he peered ahead up the road, striving to pierce the gloom with his bleared eyes, and utterly unaware that he was now standing in the full glare of an electric light.

A moment afterward the wayfarer appeared in the incandescent glow.

He had on a suit of jeans and a cap, all covered with oil and dirt, his face and hands being in the same condition, and so much begrimed that it was difficult to tell whether he was a white man or a negro.

The moment the drunken tramp saw him he uttered a grunt of disappointment, and overwhelmed by the fumes of the liquor he started to go back to his place of concealment with as much caution as he could move.

Unluckily for him he stumbled over a stone, pitched headlong into the bushes with a loud crash, and muttering a disagreeable comment upon his misfortune he dozed off in a profound drunken slumber.

The noise of his fall brought the young man in jeans running over to see what was the matter, and as he lit a match and glanced at the fallen man he saw who it was and uttered a laugh.

Then he walked ahead a few paces in the shadow and muttered:

"It's that drunken bum Toots, who hangs around all the saloons in town and plays toady to any one who will treat him. Looks as if he had been on a spree. I'll leave him where he is to doze off the effects of his potations. He most always sleeps out of doors anyway."

Just then the young man heard a low, guarded whistle ahead of him.

"Hello!" he muttered, halting and listening. "What's that? Here I came out for a quiet stroll in an isolated spot to think and rest myself, when it looks as if I was stumbling on an adventure. That whistle has some significance. I'll answer it just for a lark to find out its meaning if I can."

He thereupon repeated the whistle, and crouched in the gloomy bushes.

Presently he heard a footstep approaching, and a man with a full beard suddenly appeared in the gleam of the electric light, peered around with his hands thrust into his dark overcoat pockets, and his derby hat pulled down over his eyes.

He walked up to the young fellow in jeans.

"Is that you, Toots?" he demanded, in muffled tones, as he touched the young man's arm and ranged alongside of him.

"Certainly," replied the other, disguising his voice, curious to probe the mystery.

"Well, I am glad to know you, and delighted to see that you are prompt."

"I allers keeps my word," said the other, imitating Toots' manner of speaking very cleverly, for he had often heard the now sleeping drunkard talk.

"A fellow in the town told me you was open for engagements to do any kind of work, provided you was well paid for it, and that is why I told him to send you here at nine o'clock to meet me to-night," proceeded the new-comer.

"Then he hit it right, sir. An' wot, may I ax, is wanted o' me?"

"I will tell you, but first let me know are you sure there is no one prowling about here who would be likely to overhear our conversation?"

"Good Lor', no! Thar's a graveyard behind them 're bushes, an' as most people, but me, in Readestown is askeered o' ghosts, I reckon strong as not a cou'l'd venture in these parts arter dark fer love or money."

"In that case I will speak without reserve. I will not bind you to secrecy, my friend, for the work I want done must be performed to-night, and I will attend you throughout the operation in case you accept it."

"But yet ain't tolle me wot it is yet, sir."

"True! Here's the offer: will you set fire to a house for one hundred dollars?"

The question was asked in cool, deliberate tones, and the young man in jeans started and turned as pale as death, for what had first seemed to him a mere comedy was now assuming a serious dramatic aspect.

"Burn down a house?" he echoed, in startled tones. "Who—what house?"

"Never mind that; I'll tell you afterward; first answer my question—yes, or no?"

The young man in jeans pondered a moment, and made up his mind to carry out the deception he was practicing to the end, in order to find out all the details of the scheme this black-bearded stranger was instigating.

"I'll do the job," he said, after a pause. "Pony up the money."

"Here is a ten-dollar bill to bind the bargain; I will give you the rest when the work is done. That's fair, isn't it?"

"Yes," assented the other, taking the bill. "An' now for the perticklers, sir."

"The case stands this way: Frank Reade, Jr., and I had a row in the town to-day. Two boys in Readestown were 'catching' with a base-ball, and as I was passing, it struck me. Angry and injured, I chased the boys, and was giving them a sound beating for their carelessness, when Reade came along and interfered."

"Ah! I see."

"We quarreled, as he took the boy's part, and came to blows, when, curse him, he publicly humbled and disgraced me, by thrashing me fearfully, and I swore to avenge my injuries. Tonight we square our account! I will burn him out, and the flames may reach his workshop in the grounds, and ruin that new invention of his, which he has been working on so long. It will be a grand revenge for me!"

"Will it? Law, now, yer a stranger in these parts, too, ain't ye?"

"Stranger? Yes. I traveled all the way here from Mexico with a friend of mine for the express purpose of hiring Reade to come down there with this new marvel of his invention, to go on a trip with me in search of a wonderful isle of diamonds. But I can do without him, and forego the assistance he could render me, just to get even with the young hound. With me, hate and vengeance are the ruling passions, where a person has done me an injury!"

"What is that ere isle of diamonds?"

"That is none of your business! I did not hire you for a confidant—I want you to do my dirty work for a stated sum, and nothing more. You can't back out of it, now that you know my plans, to expose me. I will go with you. I shall hold my drawn revolver in my hand, and at the first sign of treachery on your part, I will shoot you down like a dog!"

"Rascal!" exclaimed the young man in jeans, resuming his own natural tones, as his indignation gained the mastery of him. "You are exposed!"

"Eh?" gasped the man, with a start of alarm. "What do you mean?"

"You have betrayed yourself! Look at me now!"

He had wiped the grime from his face with his handkerchief, and stood out in the full glare of the electric light in his true colors.

A look of horror, dismay and fear convulsed the bearded man's features, and he began to tremble, and burst into a cold sweat.

"Great Heaven!" he groaned, flashing a startled glance at the young man in jeans. "You are Frank Reade, Jr. himself?"

It was certainly the brilliant young inventor against whom his fiendish plot had been formed, and he realized that he had simply foiled himself.

No sooner had this harrowing discovery been made, when he fled at full speed to the town, with the inventor after him in hot haste, to chastise him.

Frank Reade, Jr. was wild with anger at this mean wretch, and caught him within the bounds of the town, but he managed to escape, and darted down a dark tree shaded avenue, where Frank saw him heading for a liquor store.

The man imagined he had given Frank the slip, and darted into the place.

Within a few minutes afterwards the young inventor silently entered a side door of the place, and found himself in one of several compartments used for card playing, private drinking and other similar purposes.

He was scarcely within the place, when he heard a hall door leading into the saloon open, and two men passed into the compartment adjoining that in which Frank stood, shut the door, after calling for drinks, and the young inventor recognized one of them as the firebug whom he had been pursuing.

"I've given him the slip," he heard the man say.

"Oh, how I gave myself away to him in the gloom! He knows the whole thing now, and I'll have to go South."

"Carrabba! We not will be able to hire dat electric coach now?" queried the other man.

"No. We must get all your guerrillas together in a body, and start on horseback to find the Isle of Diamonds, if we wish to get the vast treasure."

"Why you not tell me the story about how you find dat place out?"

"I will. It is no secret. I doubt if Reade will think of coming here to look for me, as I dodged him quite cleverly. Well, to begin, you know my own history, how I was born and educated in the north, and drifted down in your country and took up my residence in the city of Guadalupe, where I got acquainted with you and the boys?"

"Yes," assented the other, lighting a cigarette.

"Among other people I met there was an American widower with a beautiful daughter with whom I fell in love, for resembling her Mexican mother, Panchita was a magnificent girl. David King, her father, had been a surveyor for the government. Once penetrating a remote region in the south, never before traversed by white men, he came upon a vast lake surrounding a large island. A wilderness surrounded it. He managed to get on the island, when he found it populated by a strange race of people, who had come up by means of the Isthmus of Panama from South America, bringing millions of dollars worth of diamonds from Brazil. King was held captive by these people, was nearly massacred for trying to take some of their jewels, and eventually he escaped."

"Ah, dese diamonds?" eagerly asked the other, as the fire bug paused.

"They embellish the wonderful city, and are the ones we want to get. King got back to Guadalupe, and soon after sickened and died, leaving nothing to his daughter but a mapped explanation of how to reach the wonderful city. The girl, Panchita, went to live with her uncle, the Alcalde, Mario Gonzalez. It was there I fell in love with her, and she jilted me for another whom she loved. At any rate she told me the story of the diamond island one day. Her uncle alone, besides she and I, knew the story. Eagerly I offered to get up a party to reach the city of diamonds, and share the proceeds of a raid on it. She refused, and I—well, I—"

"Por dios! What you did do?"

"I stole the paper from her secretly, and now you, I, and your friends will get the vast treasure, as I told you down in Mexico, my friend."

"An' you have that paper?"

"I have, and here it is!"

He held up a long, bulky envelope, when a door in the partition shot open. Frank darted through and snatched the envelope from his hand.

"Thief!" he exclaimed. "This paper shall go back to its owner."

"Frank Reade!" yelled the man with a beard, in terror, as he saw a revolver in the young inventor's hand; and without pausing to say another word the two men fled before Frank could see the Mexican's face.

They escaped Frank, and vanished from Reade's town that night.

With the valuable stolen papers in his pocket, Frank went home with a notion in his mind to go to Mexico with his new invention, and make an effort to return the papers to their owner, or failing in this to search for the Isle of diamonds, and secure some of its fabulous wealth for himself.

CHAPTER II.

A WONDERFUL INVENTION.

Frank entered a beautiful house, in which he dwelt with his family, took a bath, and changing his clothes, he reappeared, a fine, handsome, muscular young man.

A terrific uproar just then came from the library down stairs, and he descended to learn the cause, entering at the left of the hall, and saw a negro in a loud-screamed suit, standing in a stooping posture with his nose stuck in a speaking tube on the wall, from which he seemed unable to withdraw it.

Behind the gray-headed coon stood a similarly-attired, athletic looking, raw-boned old Irishman with red hair, twinkling eyes, a long upper lip and "Galway" side whiskers.

He was banging the stuck coon over the coat tails with a long picket.

"Stop dar!" the darky was yelling, frantically dancing up and down. "Lord amassy, Barney Shea, yo' dog gone sinnah, stop! Pull my nose outer dis hole!"

Biff-bang-thump! went the picket again; then the Irishman paused to spit on his hands.

"Begorra, I'll be afther givin' yer hoide a darker tan than its got now, Pomp, ye black spalpeen!" he exclaimed with a grin. "Put terbacy in me tay at supper will ye?"

"Oh, lan'sakes!" groaned the coon, trying to pull his nose out of the tube. "Wha' fo' I done try ter smell dat hoe-cake bakin' down in de kitchin' when yo' tole me? Oughter knowed yo' put shoemaker wax in de tube ter cotch me!"

Barney's grin spread from ear to ear, and he caught Pomp by the tails of his coat and gently began to pull the coon back, when the skin was almost torn from his black nose, and he howled, swore and did a war dance.

One of his big plantations caught Barney in the jaw, and he was floored as if an army mule kicked him, while the shock of sitting down so suddenly in a tight-fitting pair of pants exploded them with a sickening rip.

He scrambled up, his temper getting ahead of him, and was just about to hit his hapless victim a paralyzer with the stick when Frank cried:

"Hold on, Barney! That ain't fair. Pomp can't help himself!"

"Och! Bedad it's Masther Frank!" gasped the Irishman, dropping the picket.

"Sabe me, chile, sabe me!" roared the old darky, kicking up his heels, every jerk of his body sending a twinge of agony through his nose.

"Keep still, you big fool!" laughed Frank as Barney slid out of the room. "Why can't you and Barney stop your joking? Wait, I'll heat the tube with a match and free you."

He lit a match, and held it under the mouth-piece.

As the tube began to get hot, and the wax began to melt, the nigger began to yell, Frank began to laugh, and the moment Pomp was free, he fled.

Both the negro and the Irishman were old time friends of Frank's, and had shared in his many friendly adventures on other occasions.

Although both were married, had large families, and lived away from Frank's house they were invariably to be found there, helping the young inventor with his new ideas, or recounting stories of past performances.

Barney and Pomp were two practical-joking old fellows, always ready for fun or a fight, fond of wild, exciting adventures, and loved Frank to devotion.

They had already vanished from the room, when a servant looked in.

"Doctor Vaneyke is in the parlor to see you, sir," said she.

A smile of pleasure lighted up Frank's face as he stepped across the hall, and heartily shook hands with a black-clad, white-haired, and white-bearded old professor, who had, like the Irishman and negro, accompanied him on the strange voyages he had taken in times gone by.

"Doctor," he exclaimed. "I am glad you have called—delighted to see you!"

"You said that the Whirlwind was to be completed to-day, and I am very anxious to see it, my boy," exclaimed the old professor.

"Completed, tried, and found to be perfect, and I just this moment stumbled over a use to which I can put it," rejoined Frank enthusiastically. "But come out to my shop, and you will see the prettiest piece of work I have ever yet invented. I am proud of it, doctor."

And as Frank led his old time friend out, he detailed what had happened to him that night down the road.

In the spacious work-shop, illuminated by electric lights stood an odd-looking metal machine, about fifty feet in length, on four wide-rimmed steel wheels, a coach with windows, and a circular pilot-house in front, with plate-glass windows showing the interior.

On top of the turret was a powerful search light, capable of reflecting a mile ahead, in front there was an arrangement similar to a locomotive cow-catcher save that the bottom rim was as sharp as a razor, and over it protruded a pointed steel ram.

From the hub of each wheel there projected keen-edged scythes, the tires were cogged and spoked, on the inner side were flanges to prevent jolting, and while the two large driving-wheels supported the weight of the coach, and were joined to electrical piston rods that connected at the under sides of the coach with electric helices, the smaller front wheels ran free, and had smooth rims.

A huge king-pin joined them to the floor of the pilot-house, where a hollow central lever, fastened to a horizontal wheel, made steering practical.

Electric wires ran from binding-posts at the lower sides of the coach beneath a foot-path going from one end of the machine to the other and connected with the wheels at the sides, while a complete circuit was formed by four extra wires descending from under the coach, joining the axles.

There was a door in back with steps, and a door going into the pilot-house beside where it joined the coach at the end of the foot-path.

All the windows were guarded by tough steel netting so finely woven as to be bullet proof, while the body of the coach was made entirely of it, save along the lower part where the electrical machinery lay, and that was protected by galvanized steel plates, as was the lower part of the pilot-house.

Within the latter was a key-board in front, with several rubber levers on it to control the complicated machinery, and over it were different dials that represented compass, barometer, thermometer, and gauges for the machinery.

The doctor went inside with Frank and glanced around the coach.

There were easy reclining chairs and handsome berths for six, closets for luggage, guns and other hunting implements, and a compartment combining kitchen and dining-room, with lockers for food, drink, and utensils.

"It is the most compact and complete thing I ever saw!" cried the doctor, admiringly. "But where is your dynamo, machinery and coils?"

"Under the floor," said Frank. "An automatic compressed air engine works the dynamo."

"And does she go well?"

"Her bearings are self-lubricating, and do not get hot at sixty miles an hour," said Frank. "There is no use of me trying to explain this complicated machinery—look at it, and you can form an idea of its working for yourself."

The doctor lifted up the sectional board, and saw in the dust proof compartments beneath, a maze of insulated wires connecting with a delicate but powerful electric machine, set a few feet behind the dynamo and air engine.

"Is the coach portable?" he asked, replacing the flooring. "I see it is lightly but strongly built."

"I can stow it and its contents in ten large packing cases," replied Frank, smilingly.

"For what purpose did you build it?"

"The same as I built all my other inventions—amusement. But I've got a plan for the future, and if you, Barney and Pomp will confer with me in the house awhile, I'd like to arrange a trip to Mexico with you."

"To Mexico—what for?"

"To bring back the coach laden with millions of dollars worth of diamonds, to thwart a villain, to share our good fortune with a cheated young girl, and to enjoy the wild sport and adventures of hunting, fishing, trapping, fighting a strange race of people, and last but not least, of wiping out a gang of outlaws about whom I recently read in the newspapers."

"With all my heart. But these outlaws—"

"Are Mexican bandits. These guerrillas are led by a ferocious chief called Frasculo, and the American government suspects him of counterfeiting our trade dollars by the thousands, making genuine dollars and working in league with some Mexican bank on the border, which passes all he manufactures, and they divide the profits."

"The profit? How so, if the dollars they make are standard?"

"Yes, profit. You see the counterfeits are made of just as good silver as our money, and weigh exactly the same. But trade dollars are only worth eighty-five cents, and when those rascals pass

them, they go for one hundred cents on the dollar. You see the fifteen cents difference made is the profit, and as thousands are flooding a certain section of the border, it must be a big profit they make, and the authorities here have been attracted to the fact, and offer \$50,000 reward for the apprehension of the counterfeiter."

The doctor was amazed at the ingenious plan, and repaired to the house with Frank, after the inventor had warned the house watchman to be extra vigilant against an attack from the black-bearded stranger.

The proposition was put before Barney and Pomp when they came in, and the map and explanations to find the island city was consulted.

It seemed to be genuine enough, and was plain to follow, if it were not a deception, and the four agreed to go and test it the following week.

The motive of going to find the diamond city was a mere pretext with them, though, for they were not sure but the story about it was a fable, pure and simple.

It was their passion for roving and adventure they chiefly wished to gratify.

Preparations were accordingly made the next day, and although Frank's wife was not pleased at the prospect of him going, she did not try to hinder him, and in the allotted time the four were ready.

The Whirlwind, as Frank's latest wonder was named, was shipped to the Mississippi, with all their baggage, and they followed after it.

Boarding the beautiful Black Bird, as the steamer was called, they started for New Orleans, from whence they were to take a steamer over the Gulf to Tampico, a distance of 750 miles to Mexico.

The passengers on the Black Bird were made up of all sorts of people, and that night when Frank sauntered into the smoking-room, he saw several men sitting around one of the tables playing poker.

Two of them were evidently typical Texan gamblers, but the other two were men of a different stamp altogether, as their appearance indicated.

One was a burly, dark-skinned, middle-aged man, with jet eyes, hair and mustache, sharp, repulsive features, and wore very fashionable clothes.

The other was an American, nicely dressed, about twenty-five years of age, and had a smooth face, delicate white hands, and smoked cigars incessantly.

They were playing for high stakes, and after Frank had been watching the game awhile, he saw that the three men were flagrantly cheating the youngest with marked cards, causing him to lose, deal after deal.

Unable to patiently watch their dirty work any longer, Frank suddenly exclaimed, just as the Mexican was about to swindle the youth again:

"Excuse me for interfering, but you are not playing fair."

"What?" cried the four in chorus, as they bounded to their feet.

"Those cards are marked!" exclaimed Frank, quietly.

"Then I won't play any more," said the young man arising. "I am much obliged, stranger. My name is Tom Hardy. Call on me if you need a friend."

The three gamblers stood glaring at Frank, and the Mexican exclaimed:

"Carramba! Maybe you be so sharp, you play better."

"Oh, I'll take a hand, with a new pack of cards, to avenge the young man."

The others were satisfied with Frank's remark, and the four sat down, a new pack was produced, and the game began.

From the beginning Frank won steadily, until he had several hundred dollars in the heap on the table in front of him.

Then he caught the two Texans stacking the cards, and sweeping his stakes into his pocket, he bounded to his feet, jerked a revolver out of his belt, and the Texans, knowing they were exposed, made a break for the door.

"Cheating again!" cried Frank. "I'll teach you a lesson."

The Texans went out one side of the room and the big Mexican out the other.

On deck the gamblers saw Frank close at their heels.

In that locality what they had done meant a shot for their pains, and they dove overboard, fearful lest their lives would pay the forfeit, although Frank had no intention of firing at them.

The big Mexican was the worst of the lot, and Frank went hunting for him.

The steward told him the number of the man's stateroom, and as Frank wanted to make an example of him, he determined to have him put off the boat, in order to save other passengers from being fleeced.

He opened the Mexican's state-room door, glanced in, and saw that the place was empty; then he directly in the face of the oncoming storm and the instructions by the bandit chief himself not to let

glided in and hid in a closet to wait for him, when a sharp click the spring lock on the outside of the door snapped shut, and Frank found himself a prisoner.

A few minutes afterward the stateroom door opened and two men entered.

"Por dios!" he heard the Mexican hiss, "I have dat boy's life for dis."

"Yes, curse him, and I'll help you!" replied the other. "We couldn't fool him!"

To Frank's amazement, he recognized the speaker as Tom Hardy, the youth whom he saw the three other gamblers cheating.

"We need not put up dat job right wid you, so dat we fleece him!"

"No. It started O K when you pretended to be cheating me. I knew he'd see it and interfere, but you shouldn't have let him scoop that pile."

"The young swindler!" thought Frank, in disgust. "He is ringing in with the beggars! Where have I heard his voice before? It is awfully familiar."

"We not can help it now!" growled the Mexican savagely.

"Do you know who he is?" asked Hardy.

"He's Frank Reade, Jr., the fellow whose electric machine I tried to fire in Readestown."

"Ah!" thought Frank, "so he was the fire-bug, disguised by a false beard."

"Maybe we get it yet," suggested the Mexican, in sinister tones.

"Ay, it's on board, Frascuelo. Perhaps we could steal it."

"Why," gasped Frank with a start, "the Mexican is the noted outlaw of the counterfeiting fame whom I want to capture."

"Por mi madre, yes. How we get de diamonds unless?" said the Mexican.

"We'll try, anyway, if we have to kill him to do it."

"How 'bout la Senorita Panchita's uncle, de alcalde of Guadalupe?"

"He is the only man besides ourselves who knows where those diamonds are located. When we reach Guadalupe he must die, so that only we shall have the secret, and you must do the job."

A sinister laugh burst from the Mexican.

"Carramba!" he cried coarsely, "I do it with pleasure."

"Not if I can warn him in time," thought Frank.

"I wonder," said Hardy, "where Reade is going to with his friends and his electric coach? Have you any idea? Can it be to find the diamond island? You know he stole Panchita's papers from me, and knows King's history."

"No. Come, we turn in. He not find us here. I hang dese clothes in de closet, and put on odder ones-morrow, so dat he won't know me."

He flung open the closet door as he spoke, when Frank sprang out at him and caught the startled rascal by the throat.

Terrified, Hardy jumped out the window, and as Frank aimed his pistol at Frascuelo he tore himself away from the young inventor, and followed his companion in a twinkling into the river.

CHAPTER III. THE RACE FOR LIFE.

"HELP, Frank! Stop the Whirlwind!"

This thrilling shout rang out over a fearful scene one week later.

Flying across the Mexican plain went the Whirlwind toward the distant city of Guadalupe, pursued by thousands of wild cattle, which in turn were followed by the low-hanging black cloud of a frightful cyclone that came sweeping from the eastward, tearing a track over the earth through trees, and rocks with a fury that was simply terrible.

The earth shook with the pounding of the cattle's hoofs, their affrighted bellows vied with the roaring and shrieking of the storm, the air was black with flying rocks and trees, and afar in the direction left by the cyclone prairie fires shot up, dying the murky sky crimson.

The electric coach was bounding along in advance of the fearful scene, when a wheel struck a rock, and the doctor was flung to the ground.

On shot the Whirlwind, with Frank in the glass pilot-house, grasping the steering wheel, and Barney and Pomp inside the coach, the machine leaving the doctor lying far behind, exposed to the utmost danger.

Frank heard his appealing cry, and glancing back, he saw what happened.

Down toward the hapless doctor the whole herd of beasts came leaping, and but a short distance separated them, which would soon be covered, and his doom sealed.

A shudder passed over the young inventor.

"Barney," he shrieked, "come out here! Save the doctor!"

Around he dragged his wheel, the flying machine described a circle, and went racing back

flying beasts, while the Irishman rushed out on the cow-catcher through the door in the pilot-house.

It was a race for life, as the cattle would trample Vaneyke to death once they reached him, and, at the same time, if they struck the Whirlwind they would pile up their carcasses on it and kill the four all together, wreck the machine, and wound, maim, and butcher half their own number.

The doctor had arisen, and as the machine drew nearer, Frank grasped one of the levers, marked No. 2, and reversed it to slacken speed.

The thundering cattle and raging storm were almost upon them, when over stooped Barney, he grasped the doctor, pulled him up on the cow-catcher with a violent jerk, and several of the foremost buffaloes just grazed the Whirlwind as she spun around short and fled before them again!

It was the narrowest of escapes, and as Frank saw the two men coming up to the pilot house, he turned lever No. 1 on the key-board around to the last notch, and under her fullest head of speed the Whirlwind went flying away in a cloud of dust, creeping on in advance of her fearful pursuers with amazing speed, and soon left them several miles behind.

She was traveling at the fearful rate of seventy-five miles an hour, and swung off at an angle to get out of the path of the storm and the beasts, when Barney and Vaneyke came in panting and pale.

"Safe!" gasped the doctor. "You were just in time! I owe my life to your nerve!"

"I couldn't afford to lose so good a man as you are, doctor," smiled Frank.

"Bedad," muttered Barney, "I'm afther wishin' we'd follid aould Frascuelo an' Hardy be railroad from New Orleans instid av landin' at Tampico an' goin' fer Guadalupe on this coach, if I've gotter see anny more docthors."

"But remember," said Frank, "it's a race between those villains by the railroad and our party on the Whirlwind. If they reach Don Mario Gonzalez first, they will murder him; if we get there ahead, we will put him on his guard."

"And we have but a few miles more to travel," added the doctor. "If the steamer had not been delayed during her passage over the Gulf by rough weather we would have been in Guadalupe two days ago."

"An' thin two days is all ther spalpeens wants, if they've gone be rail, ter bate us, pervoided they wuzn't kilt be dirownin' whin they lept troo ther wind av ther Black Bird" inter ther Mississippi."

"I saw them swim like ducks for the shore," said Frank, "and I shouted to them that I'd warn Gonzalez of his danger, you know, when Hardy defiantly yelled back that they'd get there ahead of us by rail and kill him any way."

"We must do our best to thwart them," said the doctor, "and since we put the Whirlwind together at Tampico, all equipped, I've enjoyed the ride thus far."

"She rides as easy as a carriage," said Frank, reducing speed, "obeys the wheel within half her length, and the electric arrangements are perfect. I am more than pleased with her. Ah, see, there goes the storm and the beasts."

Miles behind they saw the gyrating, funnel-shaped cloud go roaring along after the terrified animals, and seeing that they were safe, they headed for Guadalupe, which was looming up in the dusky twilight ahead of them, the lights in the old city twinkling like stars.

The four adventurers were now attired in light gray traveling suits and hats, and were full of life, animation, and in high spirits.

Frank brought his marvel to a pause outside of the city, left Barney and Pomp in charge of it, and he and the doctor armed themselves with pistols and hastened away on their errand of mercy.

By dint of inquiry, as they could both speak Spanish, they discovered where the alcalde (alderman), Mario Gonzalez lived, and hastened to his house.

It was a large, square building of burned lime-stone, one story high, with a courtyard in the center, and a porter admitted them.

"I wish to see Don Mario at once on important business," Frank said to him.

"He is lying sick in bed, señor," the swarthy Mexican replied.

"I must speak to him, anyway."

"No callers are to be admitted, I regret to say, señor."

"But it is a matter of life and death," urged Frank.

"Pardon, señor, but that makes no difference," said the man, shrugging his shoulders.

Frank was determined, however, and made a secret gesture to Vaneyke, bidding him go in despite all protests, and the doctor darted past the porter.

The man's eyes gleamed tigerishly, for he was a secret minion of Frascuelo's, and had been given

any one enter the house save the servants and Pan-chita.

Hardy and Frasculo had reached Guadalupe ahead of Frank's party.

Vaneyke saw a light gleaming behind the curtains of a window at one side of the courtyard, and hurried into the room through a door.

Just as he did so a pistol-shot rang forth.

An instant later out of the room rushed Panchita, uttering a shriek, for she had witnessed a terrible tragedy in her uncle's bedroom.

Frank dashed forward, the porter uttered a stifled oath, and the pale-faced, beautiful, little brunette fell fainting in Frank's arms, her long, dark hair becoming disheveled, the jet fringed lids closing over her dusky eyes, and her pearly lips parted over the whitest of teeth.

Servants ran to the room from all directions, uttering exclamations of dismay, and several policemen, in soldiers' uniforms, rushed in from the street, accompanied by one of the head officials of the city police.

The porter hurried up, took the girl from Frank, and the young inventor glanced through the door, beholding a tragic scene.

Upon the bed laid Don Mario.

He was shot through the brain.

Two officers had seized the doctor, and in back of the room stood Frasculo, although Frank did not recognize him, and he was pointing an accusing finger at the doctor, who clutched his revolver in his hand.

"There!" cried the Mexican. "There stands the man who killed Don Mario!"

"You lie!" retorted Vaneyke, hotly.

"See the weapon is in his hand, with which the fatal shot was fired!"

"I fired at you, but missed, just as you shot him, like an assassin!" Vaneyke retorted. "There was a young girl in here. She witnessed the deed! Call her! She will prove my innocence and your guilt!"

"Fool! I am Don Mario's doctor!"

"Call the girl, I say!"

"Unless you prove your innocence," exclaimed the head officer, grimly, "you will have a short trial and a quick death. Do you accuse him, sir?" he added, sternly, turning to Frasculo.

"I swear to his guilt! Imprison him!"

"Enough! Your accusation will hold him unless he proves himself guiltless. Officers, do your duty—take that man to the jail!"

The doctor had a serious charge against him, and turned very white.

Frank looked around just in time to see the house-porter hurrying out in the street with the girl in his arms, and put her in a carriage.

"He is in league with the fellow who shot Don Mario!" muttered Frank, "and to cover the culprit's guilt he means to carry the girl away, as she can't appear in court to vindicate Vaneyke. The rascals calculate to make the doctor die for that villain's crime! Unless I bring the girl back Vaneyke's life will pay the forfeit! Ha! What is that?"

A gliding figure brushed past him going toward the street door.

It was the man who accused the doctor.

The light streamed out the window full upon his face.

"Frasculo!" shouted Frank, recognizing him.

Afraid of public betrayal the outlaw shot a savage glance at Frank, and rushing out to the carriage he got in with the porter, and having Panchita a captive they were whirled away, just as Frank ran after them.

The street followed by the carriage led straight out of the city, and Frank dashed after the vehicle at the top of his speed, but it gradually kept gaining on him, as the driver was lashing his team furiously until it was several blocks in the lead.

Frank knew that he must rescue the girl to save the doctor's life and doggedly kept on, despite his losing ground so discouragingly.

On the outskirts of the city he saw, by the silvery moonlight, that the carriage paused in front of an hostelry. The two men got out, the vehicle rolled away, and the fugitive carried the senseless girl around a corner.

Frank had not gone much further though when a troop of a dozen Mexicans rounded the same corner into the street he was in, mounted on large, fiery Northern horses.

One of them was Frasculo.

In his arms he held the now senseless girl, and among the other men Frank recognized Tom Hardy and Don Mario's porter.

The girl began to struggle and fight to get away, but she was as helpless as a child in the powerful hands of the huge outlaw.

"Heavens!" muttered Frank aghast. "Six armed men to one! Yet I will go for the beggars! Ah! They see me now."

He ran ahead, and fired a shot at the rascals, when they put spurs into their horses flanks, and with a defiant shout they fled.

Frank was wild.

He made a bee-line for the place where he left the Whirlwind, and as he got on board, and rushed into the pilot house, he yelled:

"Barney! Pomp! Stand by to aid me. Look yonder—five miles off there, in the plains—that band of horsemen!"

He paused, started the electric coach, and grasped the wheel, steering the machine after the flying fugitives, and continued:

"We must overtake them, and wrest the girl they have away, or Vaneyke dies."

As the Whirlwind went rushing off in pursuit, Frank apprised the amazed negro and Irishman of what had occurred.

They armed themselves, and leaving Frank to steer, they each took up a position on the roof of the coach, by going through the trap door.

On, on dashed the electric coach, the dust flying up from the wheels, and as fast as the Mexican horses went, they were rapidly overtaken.

The wild riders urged on their flying steeds with whip, and spur, but the roaring machine behind them ranged up to their heels.

In Frasculo's arms the girl swayed back, appealingly holding out her hands to Frank, and the young inventor shouted:

"Fire on them, boys, fire!"

"Bang! Bang!" thundered the rifles in Barney's and Pomp's hands on the roof.

The flying Mexicans returned the shots from their saddles, but the protecting screens over the glass windows in front of the pilot house, and the woven steel of the coach body ably resisted the bullets, while they missed the two on the roof.

Just then the electric coach began to slacken speed, and Frank started and turned pale, for he had not touched the levers! Something was the matter with the machinery! The Mexicans began to forge ahead. Once they got away, Vaneyke must perish.

"By heavens, I must—I shall—I will overtake them!" panted Frank.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE BRINK OF DEATH.

HALF wild with fear that the machinery of the Whirlwind was out of order, Frank glanced at the indicator hanging above the switch-board, and saw that the supply of electricity from the dynamo was rapidly diminishing.

That was what made the spiked driving-wheels revolve slower, and gave the dozen Mexican outlaws' horses an opportunity of forging ahead just as Frank drove the metallic coach almost at their heels.

"If I fail to capture Panchita from them," muttered the young inventor, in grim tones, "herevidence as to who shot the alcalde, Mario Gonzalez, will not be produced, and poor Dr. Vaneyke will pay the penalty of Frasculo's crime at the hands of the law in Guadalupe. The evidence of Frasculo's accusation is sure to convict my dear old friend, in conjunction with other circumstances."

Slower and slower went the electric coach.

The rattle of the repeating rifles in the hands of Barney and Pomp on the coach back of the pilot-house continued to peal out spitefully every moment, and many a groan and cry of pain from the outlaws attested to the fact that all the shots were not wasted.

In return the Mexicans sent back volley after volley at the Whirlwind, the bullets flattening harmlessly against the woven steel shell.

"Barney," shouted Frank, as he turned lever No. 1 around to the last notch, and saw that it did not increase the speed of the machine. "Come in here."

"Are yez hurted, Mistrer Frank, darlin? God forbid," demanded the red-headed old fellow, coming down from the coach top through the trap-door into the pilot-house.

"No; come in and steer. The machinery is out of order. I must examine it."

"Howly sufferin' mackerel! An' just whin we made all our speed," said the old Irishman, darting in and taking Frank's place at the wheel.

The young inventor dashed into the coach, and began to lift the floor.

"Pomp, come down and hold these boards up," he cried. "I'll examine the wires."

"Golly, sah," the old coon replied. "Wha' fo' yo' doan' leabe me be? I done hab a bead on Frasculo's horse, sah. Lemme pepper him fo' ter frow him down."

Frank paid no heed to what the old darky said, but flung the boards aside, sprang down into the electrical compartment, and closely examined the wires.

"Ah! Just as I imagined!" he exclaimed. "The strain and stress of current has nearly melted one of the wires. In a few moments it will part. Then the machine will stop, and the Mexicans will get away. But I can repair it!"

Crack, bang! went Pomp's rifle, at this juncture on the coach top.

He was a dead shot.

There sounded a loud neigh, a wild yell, and as Frank jumped up, ran to the rear door, and glanced out, he saw Frasculo's horse fall.

The agile Mexican sprang from the saddle, dropping the terrified girl, landed on his feet like a cat, and the horse perished on the spot.

"Yah! yah! yah! Done plum him smack in de liber!" chuckled Pomp.

Out the door sprang Frank, upon seeing one of the band of outlaws turn his horse, and come dashing back, to pick up Frasculo and the girl.

It was Tom Hardy.

"Halt!" yelled Frank, aiming his pistol at the young fellow, just as he leaned over in the saddle, to grasp the outlaw chief.

Hardy kept on, and Frank fired, just as Hardy grasped Frasculo's hand.

"Oh, heaven! I am shot!" groaned Hardy, straightening up convulsively.

He had not strength to retain his seat in the saddle, and the pressure of Frasculo's hand pulled him down to the ground, where he laid moaning, while the big Mexican leaped into the saddle on the yet galloping horse.

Panchita had fallen upon her knees on the ground, close to where Hardy lay, and as Frasculo sped away on the American's horse, he shouted:

"Por mi Santo! When we again do meet, I keel you!"

Frank took deliberate aim at him, but just as the lynx-eyed outlaw saw him press the trigger, he flung himself over on the other side of his mount with the speed and dexterity of a Comanche Indian, and the bullet whistled harmlessly over his head, and the horse rushed on.

Within a few moments Frasculo joined his band, and the whole party dashed away across the plains at full speed.

"The girl saved, the doctor will be vindicated, and Hardy is in my power," thought Frank, as he hurried over to the latter individual.

He had winged the young desperado in the side, rendering him helpless, but Hardy was moaning and swearing, and as Frank ranged up to him he cast a spiteful glare upon the young inventor, and yelled:

"You've given me my billet, curse you, and I may die!"

"Of garroting," said Frank, meaningly.

"What do you intimate by that?"

"I am going to bring you back to Guadalupe with me. This girl witnessed the tragedy in Mario Gonzalez's house, and will expose your share in it."

"He is a false friend," excitedly cried the frightened girl, arising. "He robbed me of some papers which would lead to the discovery of fabulous wealth, and then deliberately planned to assassinate my poor uncle, just because he was aware of what the paper said, and might thwart Hardy of getting it."

"Did you see the crime committed?" eagerly asked Frank.

"Ay. Pretending to be a physician, the Mexican and this youth gained ingress to my sick uncle's bedroom, and just as your friend, the old gentleman, entered the Mexican shot Don Mario, and this cowardly cur sprang through a window into the street and disappeared, while I ran out."

"Thank Heaven!" fervently cried Frank. "You can vindicate my old friend. He was accused by Frasculo, the Mexican, and is held by the law for the crime."

"Gladly will I prove his innocence and convict this wretch," cried the girl.

"In return," said Frank, "I will restore the papers to you which this man stole."

"Ah! Is it possible you have got them, sir?"

"Senorita, here they are—wrested from that young scoundrel," said Frank, as he handed the long envelope containing the valuable documents to the girl.

"Ave Maria!" she cried, gratefully, as she pressed it to her lips. "My poor dead father's legacy to his orphan child. I can never make use of the paper now that my unfortunate uncle is dead, as I have no other living relative. But I am glad to see that Tom Hardy's rascally design is foiled."

Barney and Pomp came from the now stationary Whirlwind, and at Frank's order, bound the groaning Hardy hand and foot and carried him on the electric coach, where he was flung into a compartment.

The girl was filled with wonder at the strange contrivance, and Frank explained its uses to her, as he conducted her on board.

He left her in the pilot-house, watching Frasculo and his band of horsemen disappearing in a cloud of dust, off to the southward, and then returned to the melted wire, and repaired it.

When this was done, the machinery operated to

perfection, and getting his wonder under power again, Frank turned her glaring search-light toward Guadalupe, and they sped back for the city.

"What do you intend to do, on our return, now that your uncle is dead?" asked Frank, as he stood beside the girl in the pilot-house.

Tears started to Panchita's eyes, and a troubled look crossed her face.

"I do not know, señor," she replied in perplexity. "I am all alone, and have absolutely nothing but the love of a man who is far away from here."

"The man whom Hardy tried to cut out of your affection?"

"Yes—a young Englishman, who has a horse ranch, miles upon miles away. His name is Gerald Fitzgerald. Within a few months we were to be married. He came here a year ago from England, and invested all his capital in a ranch. If it succeeds, he will be a rich man; if it fails, he will be ruined forever."

"Is there no way you could send for him to come to you in your distress?"

"None whatever."

"Then, by Jove, to-morrow, after we exonerate Dr. Vaneyke, you shall go with us. We will bring you to Gerald Fitzgerald, and leave you with a protector. How does that plan suit you?"

"It is more than I could have hoped for, señor! May heaven bless you."

The Whirlwind sped on, and in due time reached the city again, on the outskirts of which they intended to pause, when a fearful uproar was heard coming from the central plaza of the place.

A negro came rushing by, and Frank, who had alighted, stopped him.

"What is the meaning of all that noise in the public square?" he asked the man.

"Oh, señor! Such goings on!" panted the frightened negro. "A murderer was torn from jail by the mob, and despite the police they are dragging him to the plaza to take immediate vengeance on him."

"Whom did he kill?" quickly asked Frank.

"The most popularly liked and highest esteemed man in Guadalupe."

"Yes—but his name—his name, man?"

"The alcalde, Don Mario Gonzalez."

"Great Heaven, they are mobbing poor old Dr. Vaneyke!"

As this horrible fact dawned upon Frank, he rushed on board the Whirlwind as the negro sped away and apprised the others of what was transpiring.

They were stricken with horror.

"Save him!" gasped the girl, trembling like an aspen. "He is an innocent man!"

"Barney, Pomp!" panted Frank. "Arm yourselves and stand by to aid me."

"What ther devil be's yez a-goin' ter do?" asked Barney, grasping a rifle.

"Rush into the city and into the mob with the Whirlwind, to rescue our dear old friend. I won't submit to their atrocities, by heavens!"

And turning the rubber lever around he started the electric coach, and it went spinning through a narrow street into the heart of the city.

Its glaring headlight, its peculiar appearance, and its living inmates, frightened people and beasts alike, as it came rushing along, scattering them in all directions, and as they penetrated deeper into the city, the noise became louder.

Thousands of hoarse-voiced people were yelling and talking, their combined excited voices sounding like angry, muttering thunder, as the sounds rose and fell.

As the Whirlwind rushed into the plaza, Frank's party saw it filled with thousands of excited, furious people, all of whom were surging about the park in the center, upon a heap of boxes, in which stood Dr. Vaneyke.

On one side of him knelt a priest praying with a crucifix raised skyward in his hands, in back loomed the horrible post of the garrote, and beside the old scientist stood the public executioner, with a black mask over his face, and a piece of thin rope in his hands.

The terrible tragedy had just begun.

It was evident enough that one and all sincerely believed the old professor was guilty of the hideous crime for which he was arrested, and denying him the privilege of defending himself in a just trial, they meant to kill him now.

Frank touched a button, and an ear-splitting song furiously rang out on the coach, warning the dark-faced crowd to get out of the way; and as they saw the terrible looking thing bearing down on them, the dense mass of people parted right and left and fled with cries of alarm and woe in all directions.

A terrible stampede took place among them.

Not to be balked out of his prey, the executioner grasped the doctor and adjusted the cord around his neck, to strangle him to death at the garrote post.

Down went one of the pilot-house windows with

a crash, as the Whirlwind sped up to the heap of boxes, and Frank shouted as the coach slowed up:

"Hold! hold! he is innocent! We have the real culprit!"

"Mercy!" shrieked Panchita frantically, as she rushed out on the platform in front. "Spare him! I witnessed the crime! I attest to his innocence!"

"Panchita—the witness!" were the words that ran from mouth to mouth among the mob.

"An' bejabers, here's the rat that kilt ther Den!" roared Barney, and with one sling he sent Hardy flying up on the boxes out the door.

A terrible yell went up from the people, and as the blinding glare of the powerful search light shot in the priest's and executioner's eyes, they recoiled.

Down sprang Dr. Vaneyke on the coach top near a trap in the roof, and Frank called Panchita aside.

Hundreds of weapons were aimed at the doctor by those of the mob who did not know yet that he was vindicated; but he dove down through the trap in the coach.

Somewhat reassured that the strange machine was not a demoniacal monster, the mob regained courage and shot at it, fired showers of missiles, and did everything to destroy it without the least avail.

Frank ran down the steel shutters at once and started the Whirlwind.

Away it thundered through the roaring, scattering crowd, like some terrible demon of another world—the mob chasing it, defying everything, its inmates safe. And, dashing out of the city, it sped away over the plains.

Dr. Vaneyke was saved!

CHAPTER V.

BURIED IN THE QUICKSAND.

On the following morning a wild, exciting scene might have been observed occurring two hundred miles south of Guadalupe, in one of the barrancas, or depressions in the soil of the plains.

A beautiful stag was bounding away toward a thick undergrowth of shrubbery and trees, half a mile in advance of the Whirlwind, and while Dr. Vaneyke managed the coach Frank had gone out on the platform in front of the pilot house with a rifle to get a shot at the beast.

So swiftly it ran, though, that it kept out of range until it was close up to the trees, when up went Frank's weapon to his shoulder, he pressed the trigger, there sounded a short, spiteful crack, and the stag fell.

Up rushed the Whirlwind beside the fallen beast, and came to a pause. Down jumped Frank with his hunting knife in his hand to bleed the animal, and in a moment he was bending over it.

The stag had only been stunned by the ball grazing its skull, however, and before the young inventor knew what happened it got upon its feet.

Frank was startled, but ere the stag could escape he grasped its antlers, and as it started to rush away into the woods he swung himself up astride of its back, and was whirled into the timber with it.

In one instant he vanished from the sight of everyone on the Whirlwind, and was carried flying into the gloomy woods by the scared animal, tearing through bushes, plunging amid vines, leaping over rocks and fallen tree trunks, grazing down hanging branches and nearly unseated by numberless other obstructions.

It was a wild ride, but Frank clung tenaciously to the branching horns and dug his heels into the flanks of the terrified beast, grimly resolved to hang on until he had a chance to take its life.

It was gloomy in the woods, parrots, humming birds and wild game birds abounding on all sides, while straight ahead through the tropical foliage Frank saw a silvery stream of water winding through the trees.

"I'm in for a bath," he muttered. "The stag is going straight through it!"

He little dreamed what danger he was going to encounter in the sparkling, innocent-looking water as the stag went splashing in.

"Help! Help!" roared a strange man's voice, just as the stag struck the stream.

"Ah!" muttered Frank, with a sudden start.

"What is that?"

He glanced around, to see who was shouting, but failed to locate the man.

"B'ars an' brimstone! Pull me out o' yar, pilgrim, or gimme a lasso, an' I'll corral a rock, an' help myself, jist ter cheat der Ole Scratch outer me victim, if he has got yours truly sunken up ther bread-basket."

The stag was plunging as if its hoofs were stuck in bird-lime, and the poor beast betrayed every evidence of desperation and alarm.

The water was very shallow, and had a silvery bed.

Frank observed the stag's actions with intense uneasiness, and glancing in the direction the

man's voice came from, he suddenly saw the speaker.

The man was dressed like a cowboy, and had a long beard and hair.

He stood amid a growth of weeds, in the water, a few yards from shore sunk up to his hips in the terrible quick-sand forming the bed of the stream!

As soon as Frank observed him, and saw the stag's actions, he realized the danger they were all in, for once caught in the tenacious grip of the sand it would be a matter of doubt if any of them would get out alive.

The voracious sand was fast sucking them down in its fatal bed, and might ultimately sink their heads below its surface, and swallow them up!

"Hello, stranger!" hailed Frank, as he made an effort to turn the stag's head back to the shore.

"What in thunder is this—quicksand?"

"I reckon, Kain't git out no how sense that are varmint Frascuelo planted me hyer, tied to a stake, half an hour ago."

"Frascuelo! Did he do this to you?"

"I swar! Yer'd better git out quick, or yer'll flop right squar' up terder happy huntin' groun's."

"Can't manage this stag!" panted Frank.

"Waal, ye cussed little fool, why don't yer stan' up on its back an' jump?"

"That's so. Once ashore, maybe I can aid you."

"Now I reckon, pilgrim. Ye kin spar' ther stag yer own life's wuth more."

Frank did not like to lose the magnificent beast, but its slender legs were already sunk in the treacherous sand up to its belly, stopping its frantic efforts to get away, a pathetic moaning sound came from its mouth, and its gentle, soft eyes had a wild, terrified look.

Within a short time its body would sink below the surface, and leave Frank struggling in the grasp of the sand, so he leaped for the shore.

It was over ten feet away, but he landed near enough to it to grasp a trailing vine on the embankment, and pull himself out.

"Hooray!" yelled the seeming cowboy, who had been keenly and anxiously watching him. "Hooray for you! Roarin'catamounts, you're a lepper, or I ain't know'd from Cinnamon Bar ter Shasta Peak as ther great an' only Lasso Larry!"

"How can I aid you?" panted Frank, running along the shore of the stream to a point opposite where the man was sinking.

"Lordy, Lordy, ain't yer got a lasso?"

"No. But I have it—one of these thick vines will do!"

"Bully boy! Cut ten yards an' flip us the end."

Frank did so, and as the man caught hold of the end, they both began to pull, and Frank gradually drew Lasso Larry out of the sand, and over the surface.

He winced, for his legs and arms were pulled out of joint during the operation; yet he did not flinch or let go, as his life depended on his grip.

Within a few moments Frank drew him to the shore, upon the bank of which he fell down exhausted and panting, pale and trembling.

"Saved!" exclaimed the young inventor, with a smile. "I'm delighted, my friend."

"By hokey, yer ain't nigh ez glad's I am," asserted Lasso Larry. "Done thought my goose wuz cooked fer sure. Put up yer flipper, pard, an' lemme show yer how much I'm bleeged ter yer. I had a mighty close call!"

They shook hands, and the man observing the stag still on the surface arose, pulled out his hunting rifle, and said to Frank:

"I reckon as wekin save that venison too, pard, if yer'll help me ter cut down a lot o' cedars, ter make a bridge over ther sand."

Frank did not know what his design was, but aided him to hew down a number of young cedars, and the man laid them on the quick sand, making a foot path out to the sinking stag.

Then out he went on them with the tough vine which had saved his life, and fastening the end of it around the beast's horns, he got back to the shore ere the cedar path sunk, and he and Frank began to pull.

It was hard work to drag the stag out, for it was a heavy beast, but they finally succeeded and despatched it on the shore.

Lasso Larry then fastened its front and hind legs together, cut a pole, and sliding it between the beast's legs he took one end on his shoulder and Frank the other end on his, when they started for the Whirlwind.

"You said Frascuelo planted you in the quicksand bed," said Frank as they made their way through the woods. "How did it happen?"

"Waal, yer see, stranger, I'm a hender fer a English pilgrim named Gerald Fitzgerald," explained Lasso Larry, "an' this mornin' Frascuelo an' his band made a raid on ther ranch an' captured me an' ther boss. While ther greasers wuz stealin' our bosses, Frascuelo had Fitz tied to ther back o' a fiery, unmanageable big stallion, called Dare Devil, gave ther beast a cut o' ther whip, an' away ther

east went thunderin' over ther plain with poor Fitz lashed to it—back ter back."

"Fitzgerald! Robbed! Oh, that's too bad! He's ruined then?"

"Every dollar he hed wuz invested in his stock."

"Poor Panchita!" sighed Frank. "I can't bring her to her lover now."

"Ah! Yer knows his gal too, by hokey!"

"Yes—she is with my party. But how about yourself?"

"Frascuelo mebbe designed it—leastways he carried me away from ther ranch along of him, an' when we got ter this place he planted me."

"To put the only witness of his theft out of the way, no doubt."

"Oh, yes, I reckon he thought poor Fitz wuz killed an' wanted ter finish me up. Yet mebbe it wuz ter git square with me fer stickin' him with my knife the way I did up that at ther ranch afore he made me a captive."

"He is a malignant and spiteful wretch."

"Fearful. He's down on 'Fitz'cause he diskived what Frasculo has located a counterfeitin' ranch, wot he an' his hull gang is runnin'."

"Making trade dollars worth eighty-five cents in the amount of silver, and passing them as legal tenders for a dollar?" asked Frank.

"That are about ther size on it, pard."

"I'd like to meet Fitzgerald and find out where the Mexican's den is located, for I have come down here for the purpose of breaking it up."

"I reckon he's dead by this time," mournfully said the herder. "But how in blazes did you git inter these parts; yer ain't told me yet, pilgrim?"

Frank gave him an account, amazing him, and arousing his curiosity.

They soon reached the Whirlwind, the passengers on which were anxiously looking for Frank's return, and told them what happened.

Panchita was filled with grief over her lover's misfortune, and Lasso Larry was amazed at the coach, while Pomp was delighted at getting the stag meat to stock his larder, for he was cook for the party, and no culinary work pleased him so much as cooking venison.

"There is no use of going any further then, señor," tearfully said the girl. "Gerald is ruined—perhaps dead. I now have not a friend to whom I can turn for protection. Leave me at the nearest settlement and I will there enter a nunnery, and pass the rest of my days in prayer for those whom I loved that a cruel fate wrested from me at the time I most needed them."

"Hull on thar," interpoed Lasso Larry, energetically. "Don't yer say that, gal. I've got a good wife down in Guanaxuato an' she'll give yer a home forever an' ever, amen, if I ses ther word."

"We are within twenty miles of that place now," said Frank.

"Waal, I reckon! Ain't we about ten miles east o' San Juan? That's whar poor Fitz had his ranch. Is it a go, leetle gal?"

"You are good—kind, may the saints bless you, but give me time to think—I feel miserable—sick—discouraged," said the girl, mournfully.

Frank gave her a compartment in the coach, and told her to retire as a good sleep would do her good, and they remained there until late in the afternoon, hoping that Frasculo would come back to see if his prisoner perished.

They were disappointed in this, however, and as the afternoon shadows lengthened into twilight, Frank started the Whirlwind slowly for Guanaxuato, as Lasso Larry was anxious to get home to his wife. The scythes were taken off the hubs of the wheels.

The herdsman was one of the finest lassoers in Mexico, and Frank had furnished him with a long lariat, with which he had given them an exhibition of his skill that day.

The Whirlwind had not gone many miles, when there suddenly came the sound of a peculiar yelping and barking from the dense undergrowth that bordered a piece of timberland off to the left, accompanied by the wild neighing of a horse, and the pounding of its hoofs.

"Wolves!" exclaimed Frank, listening intently. "Do you hear that, boys?"

Barney and Pomp armed themselves, and Lasso Larry grasped his lariat and hurried out on the platform in front of the pilot house.

An instant later out of the shrubbery sprang an immense white stallion, to the back of which a man was bound, pursued by a pack of gaunt, ferocious wolves, and the magnificent big beast, taking flight at the Whirlwind, wheeled around, and sped away over the plains before it.

"Oh, Lord!" yelled the herdsman, excitedly pointing. "Thar's Fitzgerald! Thar he is!"

"On with more power, Frank!" exclaimed the doctor. "Save the man! Save him!"

"Faster! Faster!" muttered Frank, increasing the coach's speed. "The horse is jaded from running all day, and we will overtake it yet."

"Hull on!" cried the herdsman, whirling his lasso with a whistling sound. "I'll rope ther stallion an' throw Dare Devil down."

"No!" screamed Frank. "The beast may fall on Fitzgerald and crush him."

"And once he is down, the wolves may tear him to pieces before we can reach him," added the doctor, grimly. "Better shoot at the wolves, boys!"

"Hurro for Oireland!" screamed Barney. "Sock 'em, Pomp, sock 'em!"

Bang! Bang! Bang! roared the weapons, and down went wolf after wolf, while the horse's fear was increased by the reports, and it rushed ahead with loud neighs, tossing mane, and dilated eyes and nostrils.

"Faster! Faster!" muttered Frank, still increasing speed. "If the half-exhausted horse gets over its fright or stumbles, it will fall and kill the man. But I will save him—I swear it!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE RAID ON THE MINT.

THERE were scores of the wolves in pursuit of the huge white stallion, and the ranchman secured to his back was half dead from his fearful ride; his clothing was in tatters from the woods he had passed through, and it was evident that the Whirlwind was rapidly overtaking him.

"Land o' Goshen!" exclaimed Lasso Larry, impatiently; "I'm jest itchin' ter le' go this lariat, cappen; can't stand it much longer, nohow."

"Then let it drive!" exclaimed Frank. "But be careful not to pull the horse off its legs. When we get close enough, cut Fitzgerald's bonds and lift him off."

Whiz! went the rope ere Frank finished speaking, and he steered for the animal.

Its sinuous coils shot through the air, and the huge noose dropped squarely over the stallion's head and body, causing it to come to a pause.

But it was now a captive, and as the coach ranged up nearer and nearer, the herdsman kept a tight clutch upon the lasso, and presently the beast was in arms length of the whirling coach, held by its four legs.

Then out flashed Larry's bowie-knife, and with one slash the bonds were cut that held the ranchman on the stallion's back.

Lasso Larry grasped Fitzgerald at the same time, and with one violent jerk, he dragged him from the stallion's back on to the platform of the coach.

"Safe! Safe!" he yelled, half frantic with delight.

These words had barely escaped his lips, when the foam-flecked stallion stumbled and fell beside the coach, jerking the line from Larry's hands.

It laid upon the grassy plain half dead from fatigue and fear, and the rifles in the hands of Barney and Pomp scattered the few remaining wolves like chaff before the wind, while the Whirlwind dashed ahead.

"Larry!" gasped Fitzgerald. "Is it you, old boy? I'm nearly dead, don't you know."

"Thunder an' lightnin', pard, can't yer see 'tain't no one else?"

Frank glanced at the rescued ranchman, and saw that he was a young man of about twenty-five, attired in a ragged buckskin suit.

He had white hair, a red face, a small light mustache, and rather heavy square features, with pale blue eyes, of the regulation British pattern.

He stood leaning on the handrail a moment recovering himself, and then with a curious glance at the electric coach, he turned to Larry with:

"I say, old chap, what sort of thing might this be?"

The lassoer explained the situation in a few brief words, and they went in the pilot house, where Fitzgerald was introduced to the rest.

The noise of the guns had aroused Panchita from her sleep, and she dressed herself, and just then came out into the pilot house to learn the cause of the disturbance, when her glance fell on Fitzgerald.

"Panchita!" shouted the amazed young Englishman, with a violent start.

"Oh! Carramba! Gerald!" gasped the equally astonished girl.

And the next instant she was clasped in his arms and was pouring forth her tale of woe into his sympathetic ears, and listening to his story.

"I am ruined—ruined!" bitterly said Fitzgerald. "Every 'orse I owned was stolen by that fiend Frasculo, and now I've no 'ome, friends or anything else in this part of the world, don't you know."

"You have friends in us," gravely interposed Frank.

"I say: thank you. By jove, that's an assurance, don't you know. But what are we to do, dear boy? She is worse off than I am, for once I reach civilization I can telegraph to my relatives in London for funds to carry me back 'ome. She and I were to be married too, you know."

"You are both poor and homeless then?"

"Extraordinary so, my dear fellow."

"Then I'll propose a plan to you."

"Peg away. Blast it, I agree already."

"Wait. It all rests with Panchita."

"Ave Maria! Me, señor?"

"It is to go in search of the isle of diamonds all of us—in this coach."

"Carramba!"

"You have the plan to reach it, and enormous wealth awaits the lucky person who ventures there. What say you?"

"Go by all means!" exclaimed Fitzgerald, delightedly.

"I will guide myself by you, Gerald," said the girl.

"Then I say we all go, and if anything comes of it we will divide."

"Agreed!" cried the rest in chorus, save Lasso Larry.

"Excuse me, pard," said he. "Much ez I'd like ter go, I'll have ter go home."

"Then we will leave you at Guanaxuato," said Frank.

By this time Pomp had prepared a savory supper, and when it was finished they reached the town where Lasso Larry resided, took leave of him, and started for the southward on their trip in search of the isle of diamonds. Both Panchita and her lover were furnished with clothes at the town.

All hands but Frank and Fitzgerald turned in shortly afterwards, and as they stood in the pilot house the young inventor asked the other:

"How would you like to avenge the injury Frasculo did you?"

"I say, Reade," replied the other, his blue eyes snapping. "I am not a vengeful cove, but 'pon honor, I'd give ten years of my life to even up accounts with the scoundrel who ruined me as 'e 'as done."

"The opportunity lies within your grasp."

"'Ow so, may I venture to ask?"

Lasso Larry said you know where his counterfeiting den is."

"So I do, dear boy. Was out riding one day, you know, when quite by accident I stumbled across the cavern in which they work, and it was only by immense good fortune that I managed to escape death at the hands of the miscreants, I assure you."

"Tell me where the den is, and we will raid it and break it up."

"Good gracious, you are not in earnest, are you?"

"I came to Mexico to do it?"

"Then, by jove, we will go there to-morrow."

Fitzgerald told Frank where the place was to be found, and thus it was settled that they should raid the den before going to find the isle of diamonds.

Next day the rest were apprised of their determination, and readily agreeing to the plan, the Whirlwind was headed for the counterfeiter's quarters.

It was in a wild, rugged, mountainous district, and as they proceeded the undergrowth became denser, the scenery more picturesque, and small, shallow mountain torrents were encountered, through which the electric coach easily made its way, until their destination was reached.

It was in a gloomy, frowning canyon, the beetling crags towering hundreds of feet above them, while the walls from top to bottom were broken by gaping fissures, as if some great volcanic convulsion had rent them.

The Whirlwind came to a pause, not far from an arched opening in the face of the cliffs, which Fitzgerald pointed out as the entrance to the den, and while all hands armed themselves, Frank arranged the machinery to suit himself, trailed out a wire, and told Panchita to remain on board.

The place had a deserted appearance.

There did not even seem to be a sentry or guard around.

Leaving the coach standing in the middle of the gorge, the five men approached the entrance to the cavern, when suddenly a man in the costume of a Mexican, appeared in the opening, with a rifle in his hand.

"Halt!" he exclaimed, in Spanish. "Who are you?"

"Stay where you are, boys, and I'll tell him," said Frank, walking on.

"Halt, I say!" repeated the Mexican, sternly, "or I'll fire at you!"

He aimed his weapon at Frank, but the young man did not pause.

"Put up your weapon," he said, instead. "We wish to go in the cave."

"No strangers are wanted here."

"How inhospitable of you. But we insist."

"If you advance one more step I will fire at you to kill."

"Come, come, my friend, listen to reason, or—"

'One step more, and you die, I tell you!"

Frank took several steps nearer to the man, directly at the point of the rifle, which was covering his heart.

The Mexican was no trifler, for he pulled the trigger.

Only a few yards separated him from Frank, and he could not miss.

As the report pealed out, Frank clapped his hand over the region of his heart, and staggered for an instant as if about to fall.

"He is shot, by Jove!" excitedly exclaimed Fitzgerald, raising his rifle.

But what was his amazement when he saw Frank recover himself almost immediately, spring forward and deal the Mexican a terrific blow with the butt end of his rifle on the head.

"Take that!" cried Frank, grimly. "If I hadn't put on a vest of steel armor your bullet would have pierced my heart!"

The man dropped like a log, totally insensible.

"Pomp, bind him and stow him in the coach!" shouted Frank. "We can use him as a witness against the rest. Now, boys, follow me!"

He ran into a vast cavern, followed by the others, leaving Pomp to obey his order, and they found the place brightly illuminated by a vast crevice in the ceiling extending from one end of the cave to the other.

Not a soul was in the place.

But they saw the counterfeiting layout.

It was most complete in every detail, and a vast quantity of silver ore lying on the floor plainly showed that the Mexicans had been mining the cavern, and thus procured their metal for nothing.

Consequently the only expense they had was their labor, and the dividend they made with a border bank to which they carried the American trade dollars for distribution over the Rio Grande.

To gather up the entire plant was but the work of a moment, and laden down with the undeniable proof of Frasculo's guilt, they fled out of the place again to stow the dies and presses in the coach.

Frank was in advance of the rest.

As he reached the exit he started and paused.

In a semi-circle around the entrance stood Frasculo's band, with their rifles pointed at the opening covering the adventurers.

"We are in a trap!" exclaimed Frank. "Prepare for a fight to the death, boys, as these scoundrels will show us no mercy for penetrating their den and trying to break them up."

"They have tackled the darky in the coach," said Vaneyke, peering out.

It was only one man who attacked Pomp, but the crack shot coon soon put him out of the way, and with a wild yell, just as the Mexicans were about to fire at the party in the entrance, he started the coach.

It described a circle around the Mexicans, and they found their bodies enmeshed in a thick copper wire coil, which Frank had drawn out.

Disconcerted, they involuntarily grasped it.

A terrible yell pealed from their lips.

The wire was charged with a fearful electric current which made them imagine that thousands of redhot needles were coursing through their bodies.

Out rushed Frank and the others, upon seeing what the mischievous but ingenious old darky had done, and passing the dancing and screaming horde, who found it impossible to let go the wire, they flung the counterfeiting implements into the coach, and got in themselves.

Frank turned the starting lever.

Then away rushed the Whirlwind down the mountain side, with the wire fastened to its batteries, and the yelling and swearing Mexicans clinging to the other end, obliged to run after it at

the top of their speed, as they had no muscular power to relax their grip.

Some of them stumbled and fell, and were left sprawling and rolling in the rear, but the majority had to hang on whether they wanted to or not, and the coach gaining speed, going down the incline the Mexicans, suffering intense torture, were forced along at breakneck speed, which they could not have ordinarily attained.

CHAPTER VII.

A DARING ATTEMPT AT RESCUE.

The Whirlwind went rushing down the mountain side at a terrific rate, with at least a dozen of Frasculo's band clinging to the electric wire in the rear, and the counterfeitors were finally dragged to the level plain, miles below.

Then Frank brought the electric coach to a pause.

"Barney!" he exclaimed, turning to the old Irishman.

"Sor?" responded Shea, who was grinning at the Mexicans' antics of agony outside.

"Get some rope, go out and tie the beggars one by one, hand and foot."

"Faix, it's their gobs we'd oughter be asther pluggin' wid corks too."

"Pomp!" continued Frank, smiling at Barney's queer reply.

"Yes, sah," replied the sable cook.

"Go out with Barney and help him."

"Golly, sah, yo' doan 'spec dat Mick can do it alone?"

"Come now, nagur, obey yer superiors widout passin' insoolts on me charackther."

"Nebber knowed dat I kin take away yo' char'ter when yo' ain't got none."

"There, there!" interposed Frank. "That will do! Go on, now!"

When the Irishman and the coon went out, Gerald Fitzgerald entered the pilot-house from the body of the coach, and said:

"I say, Reade, the blawsted prisoner 'as regain'd his senses, you know."

"He is tied up safely, isn't he?"

"I fancy 'e can't liberate himself. You gave 'im an awful crack on the 'ead."

"Where are the doctor and Panchita?"

"The professor is stacking up the counterfeiting lay-out, and my bride is studying out the map by which we 'ope to reach the Isle of Diamonds."

"Good! To-morrow we will start for the city of Mexico, put our prisoners and the proof of their guilt in the hands of the American Consul, and then start for the southward, on our long journey into the wilderness. Is Frasculo outside?"

"No, 'ang it. We 'ad 'im fast to the wire, up in the gorge, but 'e 'as escaped."

"That is too bad. He knows where this Isle of Diamonds is, and may yet cause us some annoyance. Still, we have broken up their den, and can now secure the \$50,000 reward for doing it, offered by the United States Government."

Within a few minutes Barney and Pomp had all the prisoners tied so they could not get away, stowed them in the coach, and, as there was now nothing to keep them in that neighborhood, they all boarded the Whirlwind and it dashed away.

Reaching the city of Mexico in due time without event, Frank left the coach outside of the suburbs and went in alone.

He had not the slightest trouble to find the American consul, to whom he imparted the news that he had broken up Frasculo's band.

"What!" said the gentleman, in amazement. "Can it be possible that you have succeeded in doing what the government failed in?"

"As proof of it I will produce his counterfeiting lay-out," replied Frank, "and a dozen of his men whom I have made prisoners."

"Return here with them in your wonderful electric coach," said the American minister, "for soldiers approach."

I am curious to see it, and wish to convince the president of this Republic of the truth of your assertions. In the meantime I will wire the news of what you have done to Washington, and hear what our authorities have to say on the subject."

"At the same time you had better have a strong civil guard ready to escort the captives to prison," suggested Frank. "They belong to a powerful league, members of which may probably be found in every principal city in Mexico, and if the friends of my prisoners are in this place, desperate as they are, they may attempt a rescue. Then all my efforts will have been in vain."

"It is a wise plan, and shall be attended to."

Frank thereupon left the consul and returned to the Whirlwind.

Informing his friends of what had been said, Frank enjoined them to arm themselves to resent any attempt to rescue the prisoners, and entering the pilot-house, he turned lever No. 1, grasped the wheel, and as the electric machinery got in motion, they started.

It was late in the afternoon, and the streets of Mexico were thronged with people consisting of whites, pure Indians, and Mestizos (mixed class).

The Whirlwind went up the Calle Plateros, its narrow sidewalks lined with vehicles of an ancient and clumsy model.

Haciendados and rancheros, in broad-brimmed sombreros, leather chaqueta jackets, and silver-frogged breeches, through the outside seam of which loosely rolled white flowing drawers, swaggered along the sidewalks, their great spurs jingling and silver ornaments clinking.

Indians trotted among men bearing live stock and fruit in wicker frames upon their foreheads; women were seen with their babies slung in the folds of their blue rebozos, both arms engaged carrying provisions, and water carriers, fruit sellers, soldiers followed by their wives, torillo makers, pulque-drinkers in cafes, mules and asses driven by half naked boys, were passed by the scores.

Every one stared in wonder at the strange looking Whirlwind, from the demure señoritas in mantillas, to the dudes, puffing cigarettes in short-tailed coats, high-heeled boots, and narrow rimmed hats.

The news of the coming of the electric coach had spread like wildfire, and thousands of people knew of it long before it appeared, and heard that its owner had captured the famous and dreaded Frasculo.

Frank was heading for the Plaza Mayor, on one side of which once stood the Aztec temple destroyed by Cortez, while on another side stands the Governor's Palace, in which the American consul was found in one of the cabinets of the ministry.

Hundreds of people followed after the strange electric coach, the crowds momentarily increasing, and the martial strains of music from a military band was heard approaching.

"It must be the guard of protection I asked for," said Frank.

"No doubt," said Dr. Vaneyke, appearing.

"See—there they are!"

A body of fifty men, in uniform, were seen approaching to meet them, their bayonets flashing and gleaming like burnished silver in the last rays of the declining sun.

But, oddly enough, they were all on mustangs.

"That looks very peculiar to me," said Frank, quickly. "Doctor, stand ready to close all the shutters by turning this lever on the switch-board the moment I give you the word. Where are the rest?"

"All armed, and each one at a window on guard in the coach."

"I will bring the coach to a pause until those soldiers approach."

"What is the matter? You seem to be suspicious. This mob—"

"Many of the mob may be friends of the counterfeitors."

"True, but how could they know we have them held prisoners?"

"Can't you tell by what remarks they drop that they are aware of it?"

"Then the consul has spread the news."

"Such news would spread like wild-fire, doctor."

"Undoubtedly, yet—"

"Hush! Here are the soldiers. Be on the alert now, sir."

With a last martial roll of drums and tooting of fifes the mounted men clattered up to the Whirlwind, the captain of guard riding ahead to the open window of the pilot-house and saluting Frank.

"Senor," said the man, authoritatively, "we come from the governor."

"To escort us to the palace?" said Frank, half interrogatively.

"No, senor, but to relieve you of your prisoners and spoils."

"You need not have troubled yourself. I only will deliver them to the American Consul," replied Frank curtly. "If you wish to act as our body guard to the palace, we would be glad of your service, but beyond that we require no assistance whatever."

"Pardon me," loftily said the other, "the governor has given me orders to carry away the prisoners, and at once. I must obey; and so must you! Please deliver them up—we are in haste."

Frank shook his head negatively.

"I positively decline," he replied coolly.

A dark scowl gathered on the man's face, for at that moment there came another distant sound of music approaching.

He glanced back over the heads of the enormous mass of people who surrounded them on all sides, and then turning fiercely to Frank, as he beheld a large body of foot-guards approaching from the direction of the Plaza Mayor, he exclaimed:

"If you do not deliver them up to me at once, I shall be obliged to force them from you, senor!"

Something in the man's looks, tones and accents caused Frank to glance rather sharply at him, and made the young inventor start.

"Oh!" he exclaimed. "I thought you were not a Mexican—I thought I found a familiar look about you, and now I recognize you!" he cried, as he swept his glance over the man's followers.

"Eh! What do you mean?" hissed the mounted man with a start.

"You are one of the two Texan gamblers who cheated me coming down the Mississippi—one of the rascals I drove overboard!" cried Frank.

The man uttered a suppressed oath.

"Betrayed!" he yelled in English.

"You are Frascuelo's friend—these men are not soldiers—the governor did not send you! In short, you have come to rescue your friends from me. It is a bold move to make in broad daylight, right in the heart of the city, but your plot is a failure, despite your quick, prompt action to frustrate me!"

"Deliver them up—quick, or we will batter you to pieces!"

"Never! I hear the real guard coming!"

"Curse them, yes. But ere they can get through this mob we will wrest your prisoners from you."

"Fool!" disdainfully retorted Frank.

"Present arms!" cried the man to his men.

"Down with the shutters, doctor!" cried Frank.

Silently the steel covers to the windows swung shut.

"Aim and fire!" yelled the man outside on horseback, excitedly.

The mounted men circled around the coach on their mustangs, trampling down mercilessly the people who got in their way, and a great cry of

terror swelled up from the swaying sea of people as they frantically endeavored to get out of the way.

The street was fairly choked up with people before and behind the coach, those nearest to it seeing and hearing what was transpiring, and the ones furtherest away in ignorance of it.

The people on the outer edge were crowding forward and pressing back those who were trying to get away, so that in a few moments a most terrible event occurred.

The men in the guise of soldiers began to fire upon the coach without doing any more damage than to frighten the mob, while Frank's party within the Whirlwind shot from the rifle-holes, and every bullet, speeding true to its mark, hit the mounted men, killing and wounding many, and increasing the mob's consternation.

Those in the rear, pushing forward to see what was going on, were fiercely opposed by those in the center, who wanted to escape the possibility of getting shot by a stray bullet or trampled to death by the mustangs.

The result was a riot, and hundreds were knocked down, trampled and torn, a fearful uproar arose on all sides, blending with the cracking of rifles, and within a few minutes the scene was fearful.

The real guard approaching, drove the people backward before them, crowding them nearer the coach until they were packed in a dense mass around it, and the would-be rescuers found themselves so hemmed in that their horses could not move a step.

The denser the mob became around the Whirlwind the greater was the possibility that it might be thrown over and demolished, as the soldiers from the palace advanced, driving the people back step by step at the points of their swords and bayonets.

Unless the obstinate human wall in the rear gave away soon before the awful pressure thousands would get killed.

"Only a sudden movement can do it, and to save them and ourselves from utter destruction I'll try it," muttered Frank desperately, as he seized a lever on the switch-board and turned it around.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TRAGEDY ON THE RIVER SHORE.

The moment Frank turned the lever a circle of electric sparks began to fly out all around the Whirlwind from the uninsulated ends of a number of copper wires fastened to the dynamo casing.

Every spark snapped and cracked as if numberless packs of fire crackers were going off, while the lights were blinding and burnt.

The effect on the crowd, as Frank anticipated, was magical.

They yelled and pushed against the wall of humanity so suddenly and violently that it had to give away.

Moreover, the mustangs became so frightened that they began to ferociously kick and plunge, scattering the people, and as the clamor intensified the crowd began to surge away.

Seeing that they could not rescue the prisoners, or get their horses out of the fearful human vortex in the narrow street, and finding that it was impossible to get in the coach to injure Frank and his friends, the Texan renegade shouted:

"Dismount, boys! On horseback we can't be singled out! Throw away your rifles! Mingle with the crowd! It is our only chance to escape arrest and death! Quick! The soldiery is upon us!"

"Fire on them!" yelled Frank to his friends.

Crack! Crack!

Crack! Crack!

Each spiteful shot told.

A veil of agony followed every detonation.

Man after man bit the dust until every one of the rascals had voluntarily or involuntarily dismounted from the mustangs.

Following their leader's advice they mingled with the writhing, fighting and struggling throng until the last man vanished.

It would have been extremely dangerous to have fired at them in the midst of all those innocent people, and in a moment the last man had disappeared from view.

Frank's plan to drive the crowd back was a success.

But as the real guard worked its way up to the electric coach a sad spectacle was to be seen; the street was strewn with numberless bodies of men, women and children.

Some were shot dead, others were wounded; a number were trampled into insensibility, a few were suffocated, and the rest were unconscious from blows received in the flight to retreat.

Up went the windows of the coach as soon as the coast was clear, and as the perspiring captain of the guard reached the Whirlwind, he pantingly accosted Frank with:

"How have you fared?"

"We are all safe, sir," replied Frank in Spanish.

"And the prisoners?"

"We have them all in here."

"What was the trouble—a rescue?"

"Yes. Disguised as soldiers, the friends of the prisoners came representing you to try and save our captives, but failed."

"And the mob?"

"Was merely excited by curiosity of this machine."

"Are you ready to go on to the prison?"

"All ready. It is too bad the consul spread the news."

"He did not do it personally. It came from the telegraph office. Regrets are useless now, though—come, we will escort you."

It had been short, sharp and decisive work, and Frank was glad enough to put on power and proceed under guard.

They soon reached the city prison, into which the counterfeitors and their paraphernalia were transferred, and then met the consul at the gates, with the governor of the city.

They examined the Whirlwind in the deepest wonder and admiration, while Frank was transferring his cargo and passengers.

"I see that you nobly withstood the mob!" said the consul, after presenting our friends to the governor. "The machine is not even scratched."

"It is built to withstand hard usage," replied Frank, with a laugh.

"Since your departure I have heard from Washington."

"Indeed! To what effect, sir?"

"To report if your capture warrants the reward."

"And what is your opinion?"

"That you deserve and will get it. I shall report in accordance with the facts. If you intend to remain here until the men are tried and convicted, I will see that you get the money at once."

"But such a course is impossible, sir. We must depart to-night. I will establish my claim upon my return home."

"But how about your evidence against these counterfeitors?"

"Our affidavits will do to convict them, I believe?"

"Amply. Come—here is a notary in this room."

The sworn proof was soon made out, signed and sealed, and Frank and his friends boarded the Whirlwind, and she rolled through the beautiful Mexican city, leaving the culprits to meet their deserts at the hands of the law.

As the Whirlwind passed along the main street,

going for the outskirts of the city, to reach the open plains, people came flocking in vast multitudes from all parts to see the strange engine.

Like vast mountain torrents emptying into a main stream came the crowds from every direction, through the side streets, until the Whirlwind had a following of humanity as far back as the eye could reach.

Frank's popularity spread like wild-fire throughout the big city, and every one wanted to catch a glimpse of him and his electric coach.

He stood in the pilot-house, and while steering the Whirlwind he enjoyed the cheers and cries that greeted him, but it was with the utmost difficulty that he prevented the machine running over many people who persisted in getting in the electric coach's way.

Pomp's assistance had to be called in, and the darky stood at an open window ringing the gong and yelling to the careless to get out of the road, while Barney went outside on the platform to aid him in the same duty.

The Irishman was amazed at the vast numbers of people, and shading his eyes with his hand, he glanced back at the enormous body of men, women and children trooping after them, and remarked:

"Bejabers, I belave there's a flood av Mexicans! If ther gang kapes on increasing there won't be standin' room in ther street fer ther likes av a flea!"

Fearful lest the enthusiasm of the populace might do some harm, Frank increased speed, drove the Whirlwind ahead rapidly and she soon left the crowd and the city far behind and dashed out on the plains.

Their course was now laid for the Isle of Diamonds.

They had a great distance to travel, but the coach knew no fatigue, and as it sped along in the moonlight with Frank at the wheel, he turned to Barney who had come in and said:

"We have rendered our government a great many services before, Barney, but none better than what we just did."

"Faix, an' we've run manny a risk fer the same, sor," added Shea with a wry grin, "but be-dad, it's niver a greater wan than we just did! Shure I thought we wuz kilt be ther mob, so I did!"

"Have you got the map of the Diamond Island with you?"

Barney withdrew the document from his pocket and handed it to Frank.

It was an old yellow paper on which a diagram was drawn with architectural exactness, while there were explanatory notes appended.

Frank studied it carefully, and then remarked: "If we go in a bee-line, the lake is at a distance of over four hundred miles from where we now are. It lies in a valley, between four densely wooded and rocky mountains, all of which are in a state of volcanic eruption."

"Be ther piper av Moses, an' must we cross ther volcanoes?"

"Close to them, probably. The map shows a trail through woods, swamps, plains and over steep hills. Getting to the isolated place is bad enough, but the people we will have to encounter there are a race of singular-looking giants, who come from South America. But it seems that King is of the opinion that they are the last of an extinct race. He believes them to be the descendants of one of the lost tribes of Israel mentioned in the Bible."

"Jist like the Irish, bejabers! Shure we are wan av ther lost troibes, too."

Frank smiled skeptically. It made a look of injured dignity sweep over Barney's freckled face.

"Faith yer don't belave it!" he exclaimed.

"Certainly not," replied Frank.

"Then by ther powers I'll prove it."

"Do so, Barney."

"D'yer moind ther story av Shadrach?"

"Who with Meshach and Abednego were cast in the fiery furnace?"

"Ther same. Shure there wasn't a red-headed man in Agypt until they had their hair burned. We date from the wan that kem to Ireland, an' that's ther raison there's so many schtrawberry blondes in the ould country."

"Your argument falls, Barney, for it is chronicled that not a hair of their heads was singed. Turnin, old fellow, turn in to sleep some of the cobwebs off your brain, for to-morrow you may have to work hard."

Frank divided duty with the doctor that night, and the next morning found the Whirlwind flying across a hilly country in pursuit of a herd of buffalo, at which Barney and Pomp, who were then on duty were wild to get a shot.

The Whirlwind was running parallel with a river at the time, the shores of which were overgrown with dense vegetation, and just as Frank emerged into the pilot-house after his breakfast he was startled to see the river make an abrupt bend ahead right athwart their course.

The herd of buffalo had to go plunging in, and Frank just had time to spring forward, shut off power and put on the brakes to save the coach from following the beasts.

"Barney!" he cried, sharply to that scared individual who was guiding the Whirlwind at the time. "Where are your eyes?"

"Oh, bejabers!" gasped Shea, who was sitting down with Pomp and therefore had not been able to see the water over the bushes ahead. "What's the mather masher Fra-och, I say—wather ahead! Holy putty, an' me dhoivin' ourselves into it!"

"Be more careful in future."

Barney and Pomp had now arisen, and just as they glanced ahead of the slackening coach there came a series of human yells that proceeded from the direction of the river.

Another glance through the foliage showed them a strange scene in the water just as the coach came to a pause.

A number of men, looking like Mexicans, must have been riding their mustangs along the river shore on the other side of the foliage when the herd of buffalo burst through upon them.

The beasts drove the men into the river on their ponies, for there sounded a fearful commotion of splashing, neighs, yells, curses and the roaring of bison.

Men, horses and buffaloes were mixed up in chaotic confusion in the water, confusedly swimming in all directions, some yet plunging in, beasts with enormous woolly heads and short horns running headlong upon ponies and men alike, trampling, goring and knocking them down until the scene on shore was worse than that in the water of the river.

"Arm yourselves, quick!" ejaculated Frank, "and follow me. Some of those men will get killed if we don't help them!"

He grasped a rifle, and springing from the coach, he dashed through the bushes, and came into a clearing where a singular occurrence met his view that brought him to a pause.

Upon the bank of the river knelt on one knee an enormous sized man attired in a head-dress of eagle-feathers, and a costume and blanket of russet color such as is worn by the native Indians, although he was not one.

His skin was creamy white, his hair was long and tawny, and the mold of his features, which were hairless, was rather Jewish, and his eyes were blue.

In a word the giant looked like an Albino savage. His wrists were bound together, and his clenched

hands were clutched by the left hand of a massive Mexican who stood beside him.

In the Mexican's right hand was a long, gleaming dagger.

He held the arms of the white savage up over his head by main force, and raised the dagger to plunge it into the giant's bared bosom just as Frank appeared on the scene.

For an instant Frank's blood fairly ran cold, for in the burly Mexican he suddenly recognized his old foe Frascuelo.

"Hold!" he shouted, leveling his rifle at the bandit chief.

"Carramba!" yelled Frascuelo, glancing hastily over his shoulder as the English word met his ears.

"Stab him, and you are a dead man!" exclaimed Frank.

"Reade!" gasped Frascuelo with a start as he recognized Frank.

For an instant a deadly silence ensued, broken only by Barney and Pomp, who came hurrying toward Frank from the Whirlwind.

The rifle in Frank's hand bespoke a grim command to Frascuelo, but the tigerish look of fury on his face intensified.

CHAPTER IX.

THE WHITE SAVAGE ISAAC.

"Drop that dagger, or I'll fire at you, Frascuelo!" exclaimed Frank, as he pointed the rifle to cover the bandits heart.

"Por el demonio!" hissed the Mexican, gnashing his teeth with fury.

"I have to obey—I have to obey. Oh, oh, oh! How you I do hate!"

He dropped the dagger to the ground.

Then he recoiled several paces from beside the savage.

"You are on your way to the isle of diamonds," exclaimed Frank.

"No! No!" hoarsely cried Frascuelo.

"Then what are you doing so far south as we are, with all those men equipped for a long journey?"

"Carramba! Can I not where I like go?"

"Granted, but the fact of your being on the trail of the isle of diamonds proves your guilt. Who is this man?"

Frank pointed at the giant who had arisen with a look of uttermost amazement upon his face over his delivery from death.

"He come from dere" s: a Frascuelo.

He pointed in back of Frank, and the young inventor cast a glance over his shoulder, but failed to see where Frascuelo meant.

"Came from—"

But Frank did not finish the sentence.

Taken off his guard by the cunning Mexican, he got a blow on the head from a stone Frascuelo picked up and hurled at him.

Frank fell, stunned for an instant.

The savage bounded to his side, and bent over him, just as Barney and Pomp dashed up to the spot, and the Mexican glided into the bushes where he disappeared from view.

"Hey!" yelled Barney, mistaking the savage for a foe, and he leveled a revolver at him. "Ye dirty spalpen git up out av that, an' trow up yer hands or bejabers I'll lay yez out!"

"Me good friend!" said the giant in broken English, arising.

"Lor' yo' big fool," interposed Pomp. "Kain't yo' see his hands am tied?"

"What ails Masther Frank then?"

"Dunno, honey; but we soon see."

Just then Frank regained his shattered wits and arose.

"Hello!" he gasped, looking around confusedly.

"Where's Frascuelo?"

"Frascuelo!" echoed Barney and Pomp together.

"Yes, he just hit me with a stone."

"Shure he'd be a fool to remain after doin' that."

"True, Barney, the rascal made his escape."

"Who am dis yere white Injun, Massa Frank?" asked Pomp.

"Ah, yes. I say, stranger, who the deuce are you?"

"Isaac," replied the giant, who was watching them intently, and seemed to not only understand some English but spoke it a little."

"Who and what are you—a white man in disguise?"

"Me not white man," gravely replied the giant, shaking his head.

Frank critically sized him up.

An idea dawned upon his mind, and he asked eagerly:

"Didn't you come from the south—from the Isle of Diamonds?"

The man pointed southward and replied:

"My home is dere—two moons' walk."

He then held out his bound hands, and Frank cut off bonds.

"How came you a prisoner?" he asked in Spanish.

"Ah," said the giant, in gratified tones, in the same tongue, which he spoke as fluently as if it were native with him. "These Mexicans met me. We fought. I am strong, and several of them perished ere they laid me low with a cowardly blow behind the back. Knowing from whence I came they strove to force from my unwilling lips a confession of information regarding my people. I refused, and was about to die, when you saved my life."

"So that is why Frasculo tried to kill you, eh?"

"I nad never forgive him, and sometime I may show my gratitude to you. In my tribe we have a belief that every soul is created with an affinity. Each man has a soul, and its affinity may be in that of woman or man: if in a woman he marries her, if in a man, he and that man are as brothers. They are brought together by fate, and sacrifice everything for each other—even life."

"That is a strange, poetical belief."

"It is a true one. I am convinced that you are part of my soul's affinity. The day will come when Isaac can show his respect and love, gratitude and aith in you. I will now go on my way, for I have an important mission to perform for my tribe."

The giant cast an earnest, grave and searching look upon Frank, as if to indelibly stamp the young inventor's image upon his memory, and with a graceful bow he plunged in amid the bushes and suddenly disappeared.

"What the dickens did he say?" asked Barney.

Frank told his two friends, and they burst out laughing.

"Golly, dat feller mus' be looney," chuckled Pomp.

"Garn elane off his schtumps!" added Barney.

"I don't agree with you," said Frank thoughtfully. "It is my firm conviction that he came from the Isle of Diamonds and that we will meet him again."

While they were speaking they saw that Frasculo's men had all reached the other side of the river and gone up on the embankment with their ponies.

As long as they were members of the Mexican outlaw's band Frank did not trouble himself about rendering them any assistance to escape from the buffaloes.

The latter beasts were following the course of the shallow stream, bellowing to each other, and making no effort to reach land, for the huge bull

that invariably leads every band in this instance kept his followers in the water.

While Frank was eying the men across the stream he saw Frasculo go swimming across the river and approach the other side.

Lifting his rifle to his shoulder, he took deliberate aim at the wretch and pulled the trigger.

"Cindado!" (have care) yelled one of the Mexicans, ere he fled.

As the sharp crack of the rifle pealed out Frasculo dove down beneath the surface, and the ball sped harmlessly over his head.

"Missed!" exclaimed Frank, in disgust.

Crack!

It was both Barney and Pomp who fired this time at the men on the ponies, and one of the mustangs fell from beneath its rider, while the whole band scattered and took to flight.

They reached the cover of some trees before Frank's friends could fire again, and Frasculo got ashore amid some sheltering rocks, and breaking from cover after a few moments, he ran at the top of his speed to join his friends.

"I'd like to drop that scoundrel," muttered Frank, as he drew a bead on the flying man. "But it seems almost as if he bore a charmed life."

Bang! went his rifle as he spoke, but the slippery Mexican gained the shelter of the trees before the bullet came whistling along.

"Begorra," said Barney, in disgust, "I'm wishin' I wuz in ther middle av that gang wid mesprig av blackthorn in me fist, instid av throyin' ter play ten-pins wid 'em this way."

"Let's return to the Whirlwind," suggested Frank. "We cannot do anything with them this way, boys. They are on the same trail as ourselves, it is very evident, and before this trip is over we will have another brush with them."

"More power to our back bones whin we do," said Barney.

They returned to the Whirlwind, and found the doctor seated alone in the pilot-house smoking a pipe, and told him what happened.

He expressed it his opinion that Isaac was one of the tribe of singular giants who inhabited the isle of diamonds.

"Where are Panchita and Fitzgerald?" asked Frank.

"They went out just now," replied the doctor. "The girl is passionately fond of flowers, and her lover offered to escort her to—"

"Help!"

The piercing cry of distress came from Panchita, and the sound emanated from the bushes not far from where Frank had encountered the Mexicans.

"Help!"

This time it was Fitzgerald's voice, fraught with anguish.

The quartet on the Whirlwind was thrilled.

"What has happened?" gasped Frank, in alarm.

He started the engine toward the spot the cries came from, and as the coach dashed into a clearing, there they saw Fitzgerald lying on his back with the trunk of a fallen tree lying across his bosom, while out from the shore darted a dug out canoe.

Isaac sat in it with a paddle in his hand, and they saw that the giant was holding Panchita down in the bottom with his knee, as he paddled the canoe across the river!

They liberated Fitzgerald hastily, it taking the four to remove the tree.

"How did this happen?" demanded Frank with a dark frown.

"Yonder giant," gasped Fitzgerald, pointing at Isaac. "E came upon us 'ere. Attacked me, you know, quite suddenly. I'd no time to defend myself, by Jove. E must 'ave been lurking in the bushes. At any rate 'e lifted this fallen tree trunk upon me, after knocking me down with one blow."

Deuced strong cove, 'pon honor. Then 'e said something about Panchita being 'is affinity—the goddess for whom 'e 'ad been in quest all 'is life to marry."

"The treacherous hound! And he has carried her off!" cried Frank, in exasperated tones.

"Unfortunately."

"Who has got a weapon?"

"Bedad, I'm widout even a tooth-pick."

"Deed, an' I'se got nuffin' but an empty cartridge."

"Doctor—"

"I've left my weapons in the coach."

Frank was in despair.

He shot a quick glance at the canoe.

It was quite close to the opposite shore by that time.

"Before we can get a weapon out of the coach he will land with her out of range," said Frank.

"But what is to be done?" despairingly asked Fitzgerald.

"Follow Isaac. He will doubtless head for his Island retreat. We must try to intercept him. Come! Into the coach, all hands, and before the fall of night we will rescue the girl or it will be very strange!"

"Hurrah!" cried the others, filled with hope and courage by Frank's enthusiasm, and they now ran for the Whirlwind, boarded her, and away she dashed on her errand of rescue.

CHAPTER X. OVER THE ABYSS!

"HOLD! If you move another step you are a dead man!"

This thrilling command rang out in the clarion voice of Frank Reade, Jr., over a most singular scene.

Far up on the slope of a mountain there lay the ruins of an ancient Aztec temple bathed in the moonlight, the gaunt broken columns rising sentinel-like in a rank growth of palm trees and tropical vegetation that half hid the fallen pillars and crumbling walls.

The ruin was in the form of a vast circle, with one broad opening in which stood the giant, Isaac, with Panchita clutched in his arms, while close by was the electric coach with its armed inmates at the windows.

Frank was alone in the pilot-house, looking intently beyond where the diamond islander stood like a huge statue carved out of mable, his plumed head gear fluttered by the night breeze, for within the silent ruin the young inventor had seen evidence of a lurking danger that menaced the white savage's life.

Not that Frank cared whether the man was killed or not after so treacherously stealing Panchita, but he did not want to see the young girl share Isaac's danger.

His cry had brought the giant to a pause.

He glanced in terror at the coach, for he had never seen it before, and to his primitive mind it savored of the infernal.

As soon as he recognized Frank as the one who saved his life from the dagger of Frasculo, he began to imagine that the young man was not a being of this world on account of his complete control over the dreaded electric coach.

Tracked all that day by our friends, he had at last been traced up to the ruin where they now found him.

The giant only hesitated an instant in the blinding glare of the search light, which was turned full upon him.

To his way of thinking, death in any mortal form was to be preferred to encountering the electric coach with its livid lights, its unseen mode of locomotion, its globules of snapping electric sparks, and its swift power of speed.

His mind was soon made up to dash ahead into

the ruin, and run his chances of evading the monster by hiding.

As soon as this resolution was formed, he started in.

But only a few paces.

There arose a thunderous clatter in the amphitheater.

One quick glance Isaac cast within the enclosure, and then a hoarse cry of horror burst from his lips and he recoiled.

Too late!

Out rushed an avalanche.

He turned to run, but his pursuers came faster. Every one on the coach uttered a cry of alarm.

It was a troop of wild horses.

They had taken refuge for the night within the colossal ruin, when the invaders came, startling and alarming them.

Scenting danger, and lead on by a fierce-eyed, big coal black stallion, out they rushed in a body.

The giant clutching the girl in his arms was directly in their path, and was threatened with danger of being mangled to a jelly beneath that army of hoofs!

Out, out, out they poured, each moment swelling their numbers, a fearful wild cavalcade, led on by a mighty general who marshaled his troops with consummate skill.

Then, with a rush, they went thundering down the mountain with flying manes and tails, dilated eyes and nostrils, and but one common thought, of escaping by flight.

The giant paused, and glanced with paling cheek at the mighty hordes sweeping down upon him, for he saw that he could not get out of their way in time by running.

The spectators on the electric coach, which had come to a pause beyond the line of danger, held their breath suspended.

"He is lost!" gasped Frank in horror, as he watched the enormous body of horses go thundering down the slope.

"My poor Panchita!" wailed Gerald Fitzgerald in anguished tones. He was helpless to aid his affianced wife.

Barney and Pomp were dumb-stricken with fear for the girl, and old Dr. Vandyke looked the picture of despair.

The wild, appealing screams of the girl rang out above the clattering of the horses' hoofs with startling inflections.

"Gerald! Save me!" was her beseeching cry.

It made the ranchman writhe and burst into a cold sweat for he was helpless—powerless to aid his affianced.

The giant's agitation was only momentary.

His keen blue eyes were fastened upon the approaching horses calculatingly as they thundered up to him like a huge billow, and were almost upon him.

His coolness was wonderful in the face of that danger.

The huge stallion leading the rest swerved to the right a trifle as it swept up to the big fellow and, as it was dashing by, the giant grasped its mane with one hand, and at a single bound as quick as the horse's movements, he vaulted astride its back!

A wild yell of exultation pealed from his lips.

It was echoed by a cry from those on the coach.

"Safe!" gasped Frank, as the man and the girl were swept away at the head of the troop of flying horses.

"His enormous strength and marvelous agility stood him in good stead that time?" remarked the doctor.

"By Jove!" gasped Fitzgerald, "I can almost forgive the beggar for lifting the end of that tree trunk across my body, back by the river. Such muscle I never saw before, you know."

The last of the horses passed by just then.

"Faix," said Barney, "it's no betther off we are now than we wor before wid ragard ter captherin' ther gurrl, so we ain't."

"Ain't yo' gwine ter foller dem, Massa Frank?" asked Pomp.

"Of course, we cannot abandon them in that position," replied Frank. "How they will get off that wild beast is a mystery. But the Whirlwind can outstrip them on level ground in a race and out-tire them. As long as we pursue the troops they will be afraid of us and keep on, as we have learned with other animals. Eventually exhaustion will overtake them. That will be our best chance to save the girl."

He turned lever No. 1, and regulating the brake, the Whirlwind went rolling down the declivity after the wild horses.

Faster and faster she sped along until at last the cow-catcher was almost at the plunging heels of the last horse of the troop, and as its neigh of warning pealed out to the rest, it seemed as if they accelerated their speed.

Faster and faster went the coach, and now it plunged right in the ranks of the flying steeds, and opened a path, for the sharp scythes had been fastened to the hubs of the wheels, and their keen edges gashed the legs of the beasts that ventured too close, and sent them scattering.

A broad path was mown through the ranks of the animals in this manner, but as the Whirlwind advanced further into the center of the troop, the gap behind closed up again, and the coach became surrounded on all sides by the beasts.

"Frank!" exclaimed the doctor in amazement as the coach went rattling along down the steep mountain-side in the midst of the compact mass of horse-flesh. "This is foolhardy—why have you run among them? Should the leaders stumble those behind would go pitching head over heels over them, and we would go to destruction in the heap. Slacken up a bit."

Frank did not reply. The doctor peered around in his face. It was deathly pale.

"Frank, Frank!" he cried, in alarm. "What is the matter?"

"Doctor," replied the youth, in suppressed tones, "I did not want to frighten any of you before, but I may as well admit the truth."

"The truth about what?"

"The brake is broken."

"Well?"

"Don't you see I have shut off all power."

"What! Stopped the machinery?"

"Yes. But it avails nothing with the momentum we have gained going down this steep grade."

"Then you can't stop the coach?"

"No. All I can do, and have been doing, is to guide it."

"Good heaven!"

"Ha! What is that—a scream?"

"The girl!" gasped the doctor.

Frank glanced ahead, and nearly fainted.

"My God, doctor!" he groaned. "See, see! There is a yawning chasm ahead of the horses—they cannot stop—they rush on to their doom!"

Now the stallion is on the brink—look, it rises on its haunches with the savage and the girl on its back! It paws the air! Oh, there it goes—a wild leap, and now they go over the edge, with the whole troop madly following them to their doom!"

A cry of terror pealed from every one as the stallion went over, followed by the rest of the rear-ing, plunging beasts.

Madly the Whirlwind rushed on toward the edge of the abyss, sharing the general danger, for they could not stop its flight.

CHAPTER XI.

A WILD BEAST IN THE GLOOM.

"FRANK! Look out, or we will share the fate of the horses!"

It was the doctor who shouted this warning.

Aroused from a feeling of blank dismay, Frank swept a keen glance around, and saw but one chance to escape.

Already the electric coach was within a dozen yards of the chasm, and it only needed a moment to send it flying over with the falling horses.

In that one quick glance Frank saw an opening to the right, and bracing his feet, he grasped the wheel with both hands, and wrenched it around with all his might.

It was a short turn.

But the coach circled, and rushed off at an angle with its course, sweeping athwart the flying hoofs of the horde of beasts that had been coming on behind it.

So close were they, indeed, that their legs grazed the coach, as it sped by in front of them.

Up flew the dirt and gravel in showers, under the broad, cogged wheels, as the coach whizzed around, and off she rushed like wildfire, on a line with the cliff tops.

A sigh of intense relief burst from every one.

For a moment not a soul expected to escape destruction.

"Good boy!" shouted the doctor, delightedly, as he wiped the cold, clammy perspiration from his brow, and patted Frank on the back. "Well done! You have saved us."

"But de gal am lost!" said Pomp, sadly.

"God 'elp 'er!" groaned Fitzgerald.

"If I had me fingers at that sheeny savage's windpope," exclaimed Barney, savagely, "shure I'd be after makin' short work av him for sehtalin' the poor gal!"

Just then the Whirlwind came to a pause.

The last of the wild horses went over the cliff at the same moment.

"We can do nothing more," said Frank. "I'll repair the brake. If any of you like you can take the silk ladder from the store-room, and find a means of getting down in the gorge, while I am thus employed. If any trace of the poor girl can be found beneath that mass of dead horses, we can at least give her a decent burial before we go any further."

The tragic ending of poor Panchita cast a gloom over every one of the party, and no one offered to undertake the task mentioned by Frank.

They did not have the heart to do it.

Frank busied himself with the machinery, the doctor aiding him, and poor Fitzgerald retired to his bunk, flung himself down upon his face, and gave way to his grief.

Barney and Pomp glanced at each other.

They both felt pretty glum.

"Bedad, I can't stand this!" exclaimed Shea, at last.

"Gwine ter take a walk!" said Pomp, grumpily.

"I'm wid yer, Pomp."

"C'mon ober dar, an' le's look down," whispered Pomp.

"Shure an' I don't want to clap me oye on the hash av ther poor, schwate little crather, but I'll go wid yer," said Barney.

They walked away together to the spot where the horses went over, and saw that the edge of the cliff was pounded and broken there as if a cyclone had hit it.

One glance downward showed them that the mountain gorge had steep, precipitous sides, and that it was fully one hundred feet deep, much as if a convulsion of nature had rent it.

The sides here and there were broken by ledges and overgrown with moss, trees and saplings.

Barney reluctantly laid down flat on his stomach,

and drawing himself to the edge, he peered over. Far down below where he lay was an enormous, mangled heaps of horse flesh, showing where the unlucky brutes fell.

At one side of the dead animals, he beheld the body of a huge stallion, upon which Isaac had been mounted with the girl.

"It laid beside a narrow, swift stream that sped through the canyon, and was as lifeless as if beheaded.

There was not a sign of Isaac or the girl, anywhere.

"Shure, that's quare," muttered Barney, scratching his head; "it can't be possible that they wuz knocked cleane through ter Chaney. I wondher if they bes unher the dead horses?"

"Doan' yo' see nuffin' ob dem?" asked Pomp.

"Faith, they must have been pulverized."

"Le's go down dar an' see, Barney."

"How in the blazes can we raich ther bottom, yer idjet."

"Looker dar! Whar an yo' eyes, you ole gorilla?"

Pomp pointed to a cleft in the ground, some distance off, by means of which they could descend into the gorge from where they then were, and together they went to the opening, and after a hard climb, they got down in the gorge.

It was as silent as death save for the rippling of the water that babbled over the rocks, poured around gnarled roots, and broke in a thousand tiny cascades where it was shallow and obstructions crossed its silvery course.

The negro and the Irishman glanced up and down the gloomy canyon, and then at the mangled remains of the horses.

Still no signs of Isaac or the girl met their view.

"Shure they're garn!" exclaimed Barney.

"Idoan know 'bout dat, honey!" said Pomp.

"Hey! What d'yer mane?"

"Jes' yo' looker dar!"

Pomp pointed at one side of the canyon in the shadow of one of the scowling cliffs, where the moon's rays failed to penetrate, and Barney saw the massive outlines of Isaac.

He stood silently glaring at them as if carved out of the dark stone in back of his towering body, to all appearance silently hoping they would pass him by unobserved.

Barney jumped as this unexpected apparition met his view.

"Isaac!" he exclaimed. "God bless us!"

"Waal, I done tole yo', chile."

"But where's ther colleen?"

"If he am dar alibe, she mus' be too."

"Hurroo!"

"Spec' de horse done break dar fall."

"Hohoy! Ye tarrier, there! Peek-a-boo! Come out! We see yer!"

Isaac did not budge.

"Gosh amighty!" roared Pomp. "Yo' kain't fool us. G'long now an' perdue dat pickaninny. Yo' heah dat, Isaac?"

The giant advanced out into the moonlight.

He saw that further concealment was useless.

"What you want?" he asked, tersely.

"De gal!" exclaimed Pomp.

"She no longer liv—"

Before he could make his false assertion it was belied by a deep groan that came from the girl, back in the gloom.

"Oh, ye loiar!" shouted Barney, with a howl, as he jumped up and clicked his heels together. "We've caught yez in the act."

The giant muttered something impatiently in Spanish.

"Reckon yo' don't like fo' ter hab us cotch yo', eh?" grinned Pomp, as he pulled out his revolver and aimed it at the big man. "Now yo' jes' hol' up yo' hands dar. Yo' heah me?"

The savage did so with a bad grace.

But he cast a malignant scowl at the two, and cried, in Spanish:

"Were I armed! oh! your victory would be sadly incomplete."

"Talk Irish or English, so any wan can understand you," said Barney. "Shure, we are not furiners."

"If you rob me of my affinity," proceeded the giant furiously, "there is not a corner of the earth I wold not search to find her and get her back. As soon as I saw her, I knew that she was the idol I dreamed of while sleeping or waking, and now that I have got her—to be robbed of her—oh, it is too much, to—"

"Shut up, be jabers, or we'll be afther dhropin' a bullet in yer hide," advised Barney.

The savage became silent.

"Barney, chile, while dis coon hold de Injun heah, yo' g'wan ober dar an' fine de gal," said Pomp.

Isaac glared ferociously at Barney as he complied, but he dared not offer to molest him, for he knew that death stared him in the face out of the pistol wielded by the black man, as he had experience with them before.

Barney went over to the wall, and guided by the girl's groans, he found her lying on the ground just recovering from a dead faint.

He stooped over to lift her up, when there came a terrific scream close beside him, and as he leaped back, uttering a startled exclamation, a tremendous dark body sprang up out of the gloom and whizzing through the air struck him a violent blow.

It knocked Barney down.

The huge beast, for such he knew it must be, landed beside him, and he felt two of its enormous paws planted upon his bosom.

A thrill of horror passed over the Irishman.

CHAPTER XII. A TERRIFIC COMBAT.

"Pomp, ye blamed nagur!" yelled the terrified Irishman, "sock the Galway giant in ther jure an' come ter me help!"

The terrific scream uttered by the beast had startled both the negro and the white savage.

The former involuntarily glanced in the direction the sound came from, and the native realized at once what sort of beast it was that vented the cry.

He shuddered, and the moment Pomp's glance was off him he turned around and precipitately fled.

Whether it was the fact that he was unarmed and feared capture, or that he dreaded to meet the wild beast is uncertain, but he ran up the gorge at the top of his speed.

Pomp was mortified over his flight.

"Come back yar!" he yelled, firing a shot over the man's head to frighten him, but Isaac refused to obey.

He ran straight ahead.

Pomp had no time to waste on him.

He was startled at his friend's cry for help.

"Wha' de maitah dar?" he yelled.

"For ther love of St. Patrick come here wid yer!" roared Barney.

He dimly saw the outlines of a monstrous, cat-like body crouching over him, switching its flanks with its tail, and managing to pull out his pistol he fired up at it.

With the report of the pistol there sounded a fearful scream of pain from the beast, and it darted aside.

Up jumped Barney in a twinkling, and he seized upon the girl and rushed over in the moonlight toward Pomp, who had just started on a run for him.

"Luck out!" he yelled. "It's a big cat."

"Oh, Lawd!" gasped Pomp with starting eyes. "Wha' kind?"

"There's only jaggers in this country," panted Barney.

"Whar am it?"

"Over agin ther wall."

"Look out! Heah she am now!"

As Pomp spoke, a monster specimen of the jaguar leaped out into the middle of the gorge.

"Masther Frank!" yelled Barney at the top of his voice.

"Shut up, yo' big cow!" scornfully cried Pomp, taking aim at the crouching beast. "We kin git away wif it!"

Bang! went his pistol, as he spoke.

With a terrible yell the beast bounded up in the air.

The bullet sped true to its mark at the hands of the dead-shot coon, and dealt a mortal wound. Down came the agonized beast a few feet away, and it rolled over on its side writhing in agony.

"Bull's-eye!" roared Pomp, with a grin.

But an instant later the mate to the wounded beast appeared and leaped into view beside the other.

"Hey!" yelled Barney. "Pomp! Here's the spaldeen's brother!"

He laid the half senseless girl down on a flat rock, and, aiming at the second snarling beast, which was just then preparing for a spring, he fired. The ball wounded it.

With a rush it came for Barney and Pomp, who stood close together, and they retreated.

It was unfortunate that they did so, for it gave the monster a chance to spring upon Panchita.

By that time she realized what was transpiring, and a shriek of terror burst from her lips, and she strove to get up, but a single blow from the paw of the beast leveled her again, tore her dress, and lacerated her tender flesh.

"Gosh blame it, wha' fo' yo' leabe de gal dar, Barney?" cried the coon.

"Shure, an' how wuz I ter know that the baste wuz goin' ter tackle her?"

"Oh, save me!" screamed the girl.

Rendered desperate over her plight, Barney and his friend aimed to fire again, when, to their dismay, they discovered that they had no more cartridges left in their pistols.

"Oh, Lor! oh, Lor! wha' we're goin' ter do now?" gasped Pomp.

"Saints av glory, it's devoured the purty crather will be!" groaned Barney.

"Hab yo' got a knife wif yo'?"

"No, bejabers."

"Needer am I."

"Then peg a rock at ther baste!"

They both began to bombard the jaguar with rocks, every dull thump eliciting a savage snarl from the monster.

It served to distract the creature's attention from the girl, though.

Shower after shower of large stones flew through the air until the jaguar suddenly sprang for them.

They both turned tail and ran for their lives.

The other beast was dead.

Panchita scrambled to her feet.

Before Barney had taken ten steps the lithe brute struck him.

"Murdher!" he yelled as he toppled over. "Me bones is picked!"

"Golly! git up an' run!" roared Pomp.

"How can I wid this baste holdin' me down wid its breath?"

The jaguar's ugly face was close to Barney, its hot respiration fairly sickening the Irishman, as it glared murderously in his eyes.

Pomp was wild over his friend's jeopardy.

He rushed up to the beast, and catching hold of its tail, he braced his feet and began to pull with all his tremendous strength.

The jaguar became more infuriated as Pomp dragged it back, and, turning its attention to the

coon, it made several frantic efforts to reach him with its teeth, all of which Pomp easily avoided.

The jaguar came around sideways, and Barney arose.

Around ran Pomp, and around in a circle rushed the jaguar, the two gyrating thus several times with extreme velocity with no advantage on the part of the frantic beast.

Just then Frank appeared.

Startled at the scene that met his view, he felt for a weapon.

There was only a hunting-knife in his belt.

Without a moment's hesitation he withdrew it, rushed up to the jaguar and buried the keen blade into its neck.

The brute gave a roar and a mighty bound, tearing itself out of Pomp's clutches, and, with its blood-pouring from a gaping wound, it struck the ground again close beside Frank.

In an instant he was beside it, and drove the knife again and again into its beautiful body.

Weakened from loss of blood, the jaguar roared painfully, and as its sharp cries pealed through the gloomy canyon, it went down upon its haunches weakened and groggy.

Barney and Pomp rushed up to Frank to render him their assistance; but it was not needed then.

The jaguar fell over on its side.

There was a malevolent expression of ferocity in its glaring eyes as it looked at Frank, and they saw that it was dying.

An instant lat-r its head sank to the ground, a violent tremor shook its carcass, and it was dead.

"That's the end of the beast," grimly said Frank.

"Faix it's jist in time ye arruv," said Barney.

"Gimme yo' knife an' I get de pelts, Massa Frank," said Pomp.

"Why, jingo! there's Panchita—alive!"

"Shure it wor nearly dead she wor a moment ago."

"Down dis yere feller's belly, sah, only fer us."

Frank shook both hands of the girl, as she came up to them.

"How in the world did you escape death itself when the horse came crashing down in this gorge?" he asked, smilingly.

"Oh, Mr. Reade," replied the shuddering girl, "I have had such trouble. When that queer, white savage abducted me, he treated me with the greatest kindness and respect, yet I was in deadly fear of him. He did not say a word to me all day. When the horse came over the chasm, we shot down through the air, and I lost my breath. The next I knew the poor beast struck a deep hole in the stream, and we were flung from its back into the water. The horse scrambled out only to die on the embankment. The giant did not lose his wits, for upon seeing the rest of the horses coming down, he dragged me ashore, picked me up and ran with me. Then I fainted."

"And remember no more?"

"Not a thing until Barney spoke to me."

"Your escape was miraculous. But come, Pomp has got the pelts, and we will return to the others and tell them the good news."

They proceeded to the rift in the rocks, and were about to climb up to the level ground above, when half way to the top above them, they saw the giant standing with a huge rock in his powerful hands.

"Go back!" he cried in Spanish. "I shall not let you pass me alive. If I cannot have the maiden, I shall die fighting to get her."

"Madman!" angrily cried Frank. "Is this a return for my kindness?"

"It is a decree of fate, in whose hands I am only an instrument."

Not one of them had a loaded pistol, and a hand to hand conflict with the giant, who held the position of advantage, would have ended disastrously for our friends.

What to do they did not know, and they glanced

blankly at each other while the frightened girl shrank up to Frank.

"Oh, do not let that savage take me!" she cried, piteously.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SWAMP-DWELLERS.

It was evident to Frank, Barney and Pomp that Isaac could hold the pass, prevent their ascent, as he was above them, and could crush them with the loose boulders lying all around.

"Retreat down into the canyon," said Frank, advisedly, to the others.

"An' let that spalpeen crow over us?" demanded Barney. "Niver, bejabers!"

"Oh, golly, if dis chile only hab one cartridge—jest one!" groaned Pomp.

"That white savage will murder us!" timidly said Panchita.

"Wait!" said Frank. "I'll put an end to his bravado. Retreat, I say!"

Seeing that he had some deep purpose in view, they obeyed him, and as soon as they turned into the canyon again, Frank raised a whistle to his lips and blew a shrill blast.

It was a signal previously agreed upon, that he needed Dr. Vaneyke's help, and it made the giant start, drop the rock and glance around with an uneasy expression on his face.

Frank advanced toward the big fellow fearlessly; but as soon as Isaac saw him alone, he shouted in Spanish:

"I cannot hurt you; I would sooner die first; I remember my debt."

And wheeling around, he sprang up the rocks, with the grace and ease of an antelope, and vanished from view on the plateau, a moment before Vaneyke and Gerald Fitzgerald came running into the pass, to learn why Frank whistled to them.

They had not seen Isaac, who dodged behind the outcropping rocks, and got out of sight and away before Frank came up.

The others were called up from the ravine.

Frank then told his friends what had occurred, and they returned to the Whirlwind, the brake of which had been repaired.

Taking the two jaguar skins on board, and seeing no sign of Isaac, the machinery was set in motion, and the coach skirted the edge of the precipice, and resumed its journey to the southward.

Over level plains, through dense woods, across shallow streams, up hills and down dales went the electric coach until the dawn of day, and when she finally came to a pause beside an enormous swamp Frank turned in, leaving Pomp cooking the breakfast.

A gloomy, rainy day dawned, lending the desolate swamp a most forbidding appearance, and the frogs and insects concealed in the mire and reeds of the marsh set up a hideous concert.

It was several hours later when Frank was awakened by torrents of rain beating down upon the roof of the coach, and as he hastily arose from his bunk he was startled to hear the braying of a burro.

What the little jackass could be doing in that remote region puzzled him, for they were then in a primitive place which was evidently traversed very seldom by men or domesticated beasts.

He dressed himself and went out in the kitchen where all hands were seated at luncheon, and saw that they were surprised to.

"Pomp," he exclaimed, "as I see you have dined, go out and see where that burro is. I'd go myself only that I am as hungry as a bear."

The darky complied, and Frank sat down and broke his fast.

He had hardly concluded when Pomp returned.

"I've done foun' de beast," announced he, "but and struck him."

clar ter glory, kain't see de gosh blame ting, kase he am hid in de swamp, Massa Frank."

"That's queer; I wonder how he got there?"

"Doan' know, chile. Try ter git in to 'im an' sink knee deep in de mud."

The little beast broke out again with a furious bawling at this juncture, and Frank arose impatiently and put on his cap.

"I never could bear to see a dumb animal in distress!" he exclaimed, going out, "They are so helpless. I'm going to find out where it is, and if the poor thing is stuck in the mud I'll try to get it out."

"Shure an' it's me own heart is touched intirely for ther crather," said Barney, "an' bedad I'm wid yer ter tind ther heft av me hand."

"Lord amassy," grinned Pomp. "Blood allers tells, Barney. One jackass done help de oder one ebery time. Yah! Yah! Yah!"

Had Frank not been outside, Pomp would not have made this remark; but he no sooner had the words out of his mouth, when Barney emptied the contents of a soup dish on his head, and ran out.

Frank was prospecting for a chance to get into the swamp, and just as Barney appeared, he came across a ridge of turf ground, and darted in amid the dense undergrowth in the direction of the braying.

He had a solid footing through the oozy ground and he reached a spot where a large number of trees had fallen, tearing out their roots from the mire, and there found a solid walk.

It was surrounded by tall, tangled bushes, covered with vines and in the middle stood the little beast, the cries of which drew him there.

One of its hoofs was inbedded between two prostrate tree trunks, and wedged so tightly that it could not get away.

There was a huge Mexican saddle on its back, but there was not the remotest sign of a human being anywhere near.

Frank looked at the little beast in amazement.

He was mystified over its presence there all alone.

But he soon found that the burro was merely a bait, secured there so that its cries would bring him into the swamp to his doom.

Through a break in the gnarled, leafless bushes, he suddenly beheld a number of chinampas or floating gardens as they were once called.

They were made of mud heaped on rafts of reeds and brush, and upon them he saw a number of half naked swamp-dwellers, armed with primitive spears, bows and arrows, and stone weapons.

Instantly he realized who and what they were.

In years gone by, a ruler in that region named Coxcoxtli, who aided a race of Aztec people, found that they were a blood-thirsty tribe, and his people drove the Aztecs out, to live in misery and want in the swamps.

It was the remains of this tribe, who lived on rafts, that Frank saw.

They did not make the slightest noise, as their rafts came on through the slimy water of the swamp, and as Frank had heard of their evil character, and saw through their plot to entrap him he came to the conclusion that they must have seen the passengers of the Whirlwind, and contemplated doing them some mischief.

"The best thing I can do is to get out of here," he muttered; "those fellows, living in this remote spot, and buried in the heart of this desolate swamp, must be uncivilized. A tribe of savages inheriting the terrible religion and character of their ancestors, they must find a delight yet in human sacrifice."

Frank did not relish the prospect of capture, having the heart cut out of his living body, and then being burnt as an offering to the sun.

He started back to retreat, when a huge arrow came flying through the air with a whistling sound, and struck him.

It was tipped with a massive flint barb, and glancing along the side of his head, it knocked him senseless.

He uttered a sharp cry of pain, flung up both hands and fell over upon his back, just as Barney appeared.

The Irishman uttered an ejaculation of alarm, for he saw the swamp-dwellers, noted the fatal arrow shot, and imagined for an instant that Frank had been killed.

"Howly Virgin! Wud yer luck at that!" he gasped in horror.

There came a crashing in the bushes as he spoke, and an instant later they parted and a dozen of the Aztecs rushed into view.

Before the startled Irishman could start toward Frank, a shower of spears and arrows came whistling toward him.

He sprang back, only just in time to save his life, for the missiles struck the spot where he had been standing within a radius of a dozen feet, and stuck in the mud.

"Back wid yez!" the angry Irishman roared, as he recovered his wits and jerked a revolver out of his belt. "Be jabers, it's me loife yez be's aither wantin', but be ther powers I'll not give it ter yez, so I won't. Now take that, bad cess ter yez!"

And bang went his revolver.

A fearful yell answered the shot, and one of the men fell.

"Wan fer poor Masther Frank, may God rest his soul," the furious Irishman muttered, grimly, as he raised his weapon.

Again a volley of spears and arrows came toward Barney.

He doggedly stood his ground, and the screaming weapons flew all around him like hail, a spear darting between his body and his arm, an arrow piercing his coat, and several grazing his flesh so closely that they lacerated his skin.

Bang! bang! went two more shots.

Not a bullet was wasted, for the Aztecs were grouped in bunch, and two more of their number fell never to rise again.

The whole band burst into a simultaneous yell of rage, and as a second raft emptied its crew amid the bushes more weapons reached Barney, and an arrow went through the fleshy part of his arm.

He did not flinch.

He wanted to drive the yellow-skinned hordes back so that he could gain possession of Frank's body, but they would not move.

Bang! bang! bang! rang out the pistol again, and he had but one shot left, when the Aztecs made a rush forward and several of them seized upon Frank.

Barney's heart sank like lead.

"Be heavens, they've got him!" he groaned. "It's no good I can be aither doin' here now, so it's back I'll go ter ther coach an' warn the rest ter come wid me ter save Frank dead or alive."

He turned, fired the last shot at the savages and fled, for he saw them preparing to fire at him again.

The moment he disappeared the swamp dwellers gave utterance to a fearful cry of triumph, and, carrying Frank's body on board of one of the rafts, the whole party embarked, and they glided away in the rain toward the center of the swamp.

CHAPTER XIV.

A HUMAN SACRIFICE TO THE SUN.

WHEN Frank recovered his senses he found himself bound hand and foot lying within a vast room, the walls of which were perforated by many open windows, breast high from the floor.

The room was constructed of adobe brick, and seemed to belong to an immense building of some kind.

There were huge, rusty chains, of an ancient pattern, fastening Frank to a large ring secured to

the wall, and the room had but few articles in it, of a strange, unique pattern.

Near the huge, circular doorway there stood two massive jars, in the middle of the room arose a square stone altar, upon which a fire was smoldering, giving out a strange odor of fragrant incense, and ranged about were several earthen pieces of furniture that looked as if they might have done service as chairs.

In one of them sat a man dozing.

He was evidently an Aztec, and he wore only a short skirt, and grasped a spear in his hand.

Out of doors it was still raining monotonously, although the sky was darker, looking as if night was falling.

Frank took in the whole situation at a single glance, and then remembered what had befallen him.

His head ached and throbbed fearfully where the stone arrow tip had grazed his skull, knocking the senses out of him.

"Hello!" he shouted at the dozing man in Spanish. "Wake up!"

The Aztec sprang to his feet as if he was shot, rubbed his eyes, raised his spear and glanced hastily around in alarm.

When he saw that it was Frank who addressed him, he muttered something, scowled at the young inventor, and peering at his bonds, to see if they were safely secured, he walked over to one of the huge jars by the door.

Across the top of it was stretched some sort of skin, and he seized a crude drum-stick and began to beat on it.

A strange, dull rumbling sound pealed through the room, and went echoing through the building; and its reverberations had hardly ceased, when into the room trooped a large number of people.

They were all attired in flowing gowns made of some material woven by hand from the fibrous bark of certain trees, and dyed different colors, ranging from a bright crimson to a deep azure shade.

They formed in a group near the door and set up a weird, dirge-like chant, while the eldest one advanced, and, standing in front of the stone altar, he stirred up the fire with a short rod and said something to the man who had been guarding Frank.

That individual approached the youth, liberated him of the heavy chains and lifted him bodily upon a flat stone on top of the altar in front of the aged man.

Frank was lying upon his back.

The sentry tore open his clothing, baring his breast.

Instantly the horrible truth dawned upon Frank.

"They mean to make a human sacrifice of me," he thought.

This suspicion was verified when he saw the old man draw a long, sharp knife from his girdle and fix a piercing glance upon his prisoner's white skin, as if calculating the best spot in which to plunge his keen weapon.

There seemed to be no means of escaping death now, and Frank closed his eyes to shut out the dismaying scene, for a feeling of hopeless despair took possession of him.

The chanting of the robed men at the door grew louder and fiercer and the leaden clouds broke outside, while a golden shaft of the declining sun shot up athwart the heavens.

It caused the head priest (if such he were) to utter an involuntary invocation to his deity, and raise the blade to strike the fatal blow ere the symbol of his religion faded from the sky and left it overcast again by the storm clouds.

As the gleaming knife trembled in the air over Frank's bared bosom there rang a loud shout through the apartment.

Frank opened his eyes and glanced at the check, for this path is narrow for the coach, and

windows, when a throb of joy passed over him to see Barney, Pomp, Vaneyke and Fitzgerald each occupying a window apiece, aiming their rifles at the Aztecs.

Vaneyke fired at the man who was about to stab Frank and the Aztec uttered a moan, clapped one hand to his bosom, and dropping the knife to the floor, he fell prostrate.

A wild cry pealed from the crowd near the door.

They were startled and terrified.

With one accord they retreated through the door, and before the last man vanished the doctor sprang in the window, rushed up to Frank, snatched up the knife which the priest had dropped, and cut Frank's bonds.

"Thank God! We found you just in time!" he gasped.

"Oh, professor—I thought my last moment had come!" said Frank.

"Come—out of the window with me before the Aztecs return."

"I hear them coming now."

With a bound Frank landed on the floor, jumped over the still and prostrate figure of the man who tried to kill him, and following the doctor, he leaped out the window.

Just as his feet touched the ground, the sharp crack of his vigilant friends' rifles rang out in the room, followed by three shrieks of mortal distress from the men whom the bullets pierced. A shower of spears and arrows came flying out the windows, the three guardsmen just ducking in time to escape getting shot.

"Go!" shouted Barney. "Shure they've called in an army ag'in' us!"

"Which way?" panted Frank.

"Along this road!" said Vaneyke, pointing at a broad path that wound in amid a dense woods that surrounded them.

They fled along the road, and Frank glanced back over his shoulder. He saw that he had been confined in a huge abode building, half of which had fallen to decay before the ravages of time and weather.

It had once been an imposing Aztec temple, but now was a ruin.

On all sides save where the road approached it was surrounded by water and mire that made up the swamp in which the Aztecs dwelt.

In the windows of the one-story, spread building there appeared a vast number of the Aztecs, all of whom were shouting and tumbling out, to come in pursuit of the fugitives.

On either side of the foot-road the rafts were moored, and as the five sped into the gloom of the rain-soaked trees, Frank asked Fitzgerald:

"How under the sun did you manage to trace me up to this place?"

"We came in the Whirlwind, don't you know. Barney came back and told us you were captured, but 'ow the deuce to follow your captors through the beastly quagmire we really did not know. By searching, 'owever, we found this path leading in from the main, and following it, we finally reached the Aztec temple."

"By jove, and there stands the coach."

"To be sure, me dear fellow, and Panchita guarding it with a rifle!"

Another glance backward showed them an alarming sight.

An immense number of the Aztecs, fully armed, savage, and bent upon avenging the deaths and wounds of their friends, were in hot pursuit of Frank's party.

They ran with wonderful speed, and were dangerously close when our friends sprang on board the electric coach by the rear door, and let down the steel shutters over the glass windows.

"Station yourselves at the ports!" shouted Frank. "Pepper them well, boys, to hold them in

unless I manage to steer carefully we may run off into the marsh. Not one of those swamp-dwellers cares a fig for his life, and if they find that their weapons are of no avail, they may try to run us in the mud, when we would be helpless."

Panchita remained in the pilot-house with Frank, while the four others stationed themselves at the windows of the car with their repeating rifles and began to blaze away at their pursuers.

Many of the Aztecs fell, and some of them sprang on the rafts and poled away, disappearing in the rank weeds.

the coach, dashing everything out of its relentless way.

She spun ahead and went around a long curve, and a cry pealed from Frank's lips, and he convulsively reversed the lever and put on the brake, for there was an obstruction ahead that threatened to smash the Whirlwind to pieces once she struck it.

Some more of the natives had landed from the rafts before the coach reached the spot by taking a short cut, and a score of them were piling up a lot of tree trunks across her path.

The four men in the carriage section opened fire on the savages, but as soon as one man fell in their ranks, the gap was filled by a dozen others, eager to take his place.

"By jingo, they are brave men!" exclaimed Frank.

"Not brave," said Panchita, "but of a malicious, animal brutality."

"They will destroy the coach if they are not stopped!"

"What can be done, Mr. Reade?"



Up flew the dirt and gravel in showers, under the broad, cogged wheels, as the coach whizzed around, and off she rushed like wildfire, on a line with the cliff tops. A sigh of intense relief burst from every one. For a moment not a soul expected to escape destruction.

Frank started the machinery and the Whirlwind rolled away through the gloomy arcade of trees, the undaunted savages pressing on tigerishly, despite the havoc created in their ranks, sending volley after volley at the electric coach.

The weapons struck harmlessly against the shell, broke, and fell to the ground.

Not two hundred yards ahead Frank saw that some of the Aztecs had landed from the rafts to intercept the coach.

They formed in a compact mass across the road to bar the Whirlwind's passage, and a pitying look crossed Frank's face.

He turned lever No. 1 around to its fullest extent, and under a fearful pressure the coach dashed headlong into the mass of men.

The keen-edged cow-catcher tossed, scattered, and cut them, while the scythes attached to the wheel-hubs mowed them down like hay.

The cries that arose were frightful. Through the mass of destroyed humanity rushed

They were caught in a trap then, for they could not surmount the barricade in front, and a veritable army of the frantic sun-worshippers were rushing after them in the rear, intent upon butchering them.

CHAPTER XV.

THE AVALANCHE.

THE moment Frank saw that their further progress was stopped he brought the Whirlwind to a pause, within a dozen paces of the barricade, and relinquished his grasp on the wheel.

The men who had thrown the tree-trunks across their path mounted the barricade, armed with huge stones, with which they began to bombard the coach with relentless fury.

As the pelting rocks came thundering and crashing against the coach, it shook under the fearful concussions, and an attack was begun by the men in the rear almost at the same moment, with their

"I will show you!" exclaimed Frank, in grim tones.

He ran into his store-room, hastily donned his suit of chain mail and filling a small basket with dynamite hand-grenades, he opened the door in the pilot house, and stepped out on the front platform.

A hail of rocks came flying toward him. One of them struck him on the side and knocked him against the closed window of the pilot-house, but did him no harm.

He took a grenade from the basket, and flung it at the barricade.

It burst with a tremendous report, and hurling several of the logs aside, it tore a breach in the ranks of the men opposing him.

Again he let one drive. It struck the ground in front of the logs and burst, throwing up a cloud of dirt and stones that enveloped the rock flying, while its flying particles struck fearful havoc in their midst.

A third grenade tore the barricade apart, and the few remaining Aztecs became so terrified at the fearful, destructive engine of war employed by Frank, that they fled to their raft and departed.

One more shell scattered the remaining logs, opened a clear passage ahead, and although a huge hole was torn in the ground that rapidly filled up with swamp water, Frank saw that the coach could go through it in safety.

He was just upon the point of going inside, when with a terrible rush the savages who had been

"Well?" came the voice of the girl within the pilot-house.

"Turn lever No. 4 all the way around."

"Very well!"

"And do not touch any of the metal work, on your life!"

"It is done!"

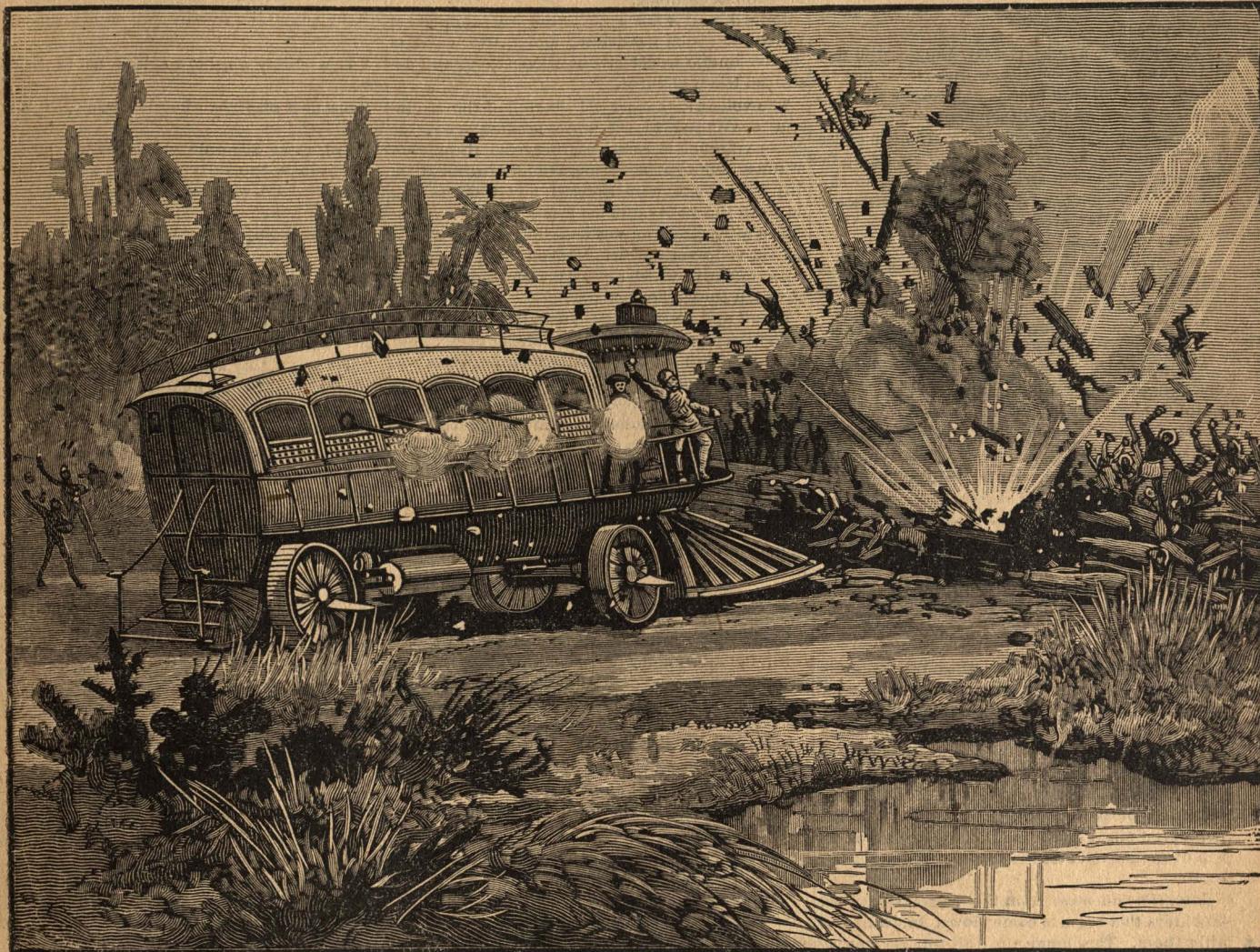
A terrible cry of woe burst from the lips of the men who had hold of the coach, and they were hurled down as if they were struck by lightning, for by turning the lever in question the entire

tumult, as Frank continued to hurl the bombs into the midst of the scattering crowd of Aztecs.

At first the natives stubbornly hesitated, as if bent upon trying to resist even the fearful engines of death and destruction in Frank's hands, but when they saw their numbers going down by the scores, they began to waver and flinch.

A few more explosions in their midst determined them to fly, and pursued by a terrible fusillade, they broke and ran.

Frank followed them a short distance, sending



He took a grenade from the basket, and flung it at the barricade. It burst with a tremendous report, and hurling several of the logs aside, it tore a breach in the ranks of the men opposing him. Again he let one drive.

coming on in the rear surged up to the coach, coach body became electrified by a powerful current.

and surrounded it by hundreds.

Their yelling and the rattling of their weapons against the metallic body of the Whirlwind created a fearful noise.

A large, heavy spear came flying toward Frank, struck him a violent blow, and knocked him over the railing to the ground.

He landed on his feet like a cat, and sprang back out of reach of a score of spears that were raised against him.

The blazing rifles in the ports did not make the infuriated men flinch, for they rushed at the coach in a body, and seizing hold of it, they pushed, pulled, tugged and tore at it, with the evident intention of throwing it into the swamp.

It began to roll on its wheels, and a chill passed over Frank as he saw that once they swung it around or upset it, the Whirlwind would be irrevocably lost.

"Panchita!" he shouted at the top of his voice.

several parting shots after them to keep them moving.

Then he returned to the coach.

Panchita had shut off the electric current.

The coach was badly battered and bruised, but nothing was broken, and when Frank re-entered the pilot-house and started her, she went along as good as usual.

The breach in the ground was safely crossed.

It occupied fully quarter of an hour for the Whirlwind to get out of the swamp on the south side, and they lost no time in getting as far away from it as possible.

A ten mile run up a mountain to the banks of a river followed, when they came to a pause for the night; an examination of the coach showed that beyond a severe battering, she suffered no damage, and after a savory supper had been partaken of they turned in.

The following day dawned bright and clear.

Our friends held a consultation, and came to the

conclusion that by the following day they would arrive within sight of the Isle of Diamonds, for the coach was then in a valley between two of the four mountains in whose basin the wonderful island was said to lay.

The waters of the river afforded an abundance of fish, and in the afternoon Frank took a line and went off with Barney to spend an hour angling before the coach was again gotten under headway.

They followed the course of the stream up the mountain for half an hour, and finally took up a position below a huge cone, which looked as if it might at one time have been the crater of an extinct volcano.

Enshrouded in a rocky retreat, they cast in their lines, and within a short time discovered that the place could not have been better selected to tempt the finny beauties which they began to land.

"I never enjoyed better fishing in my life, Barney," said Frank, as he darted a glance up the mountain, "but I'm afraid we are going to have some trouble unless we get away from here soon."

"Throuble, is it? Shure, an' I-ha l!"

"Did you feel the earth tremble then?"

"Och, but it's legs ter dance on ther world is gittin'," said Barney, springing up and glancing around with an amazed look.

"No, it's an inside convulsion—an earthquake."

"Bedad, we'd be better run."

"That won't do us any good. I've felt the shaking ever since we first sat down here. These mountains are volcanic."

"An' look! Faith this wan is schmokin' its poipe!" said Barney in alarm, pointing up at the cone above them, from which a thin, spiral wreath of vapor was now arising skyward.

"That," replied Frank after a glance, "is the fore-runner of an eruption. At any moment the volcano may burst forth with fire and smoke, hurling up dirt and rocks, and vomiting fiery lava streams—"

"Whist!"

Boom!

A report like smothered thunder suddenly rolled beneath their feet and a sickening sensation passed over them as the earth moved.

Huge boulders loosened from their beds began to roll down the steep incline, and threatened to crush them.

"Barney, follow me for your life!" cried Frank, making a break for a growth of timber, which he perceived might shelter them, and they ran at the top of their speed over the trembling and shaking earth.

A terrible din arose from the rocks, stones and boulders that began to come down in avalanches after them. They heard the dull reports growing louder and fiercer under the earth's crust, and as thicker volumes of smoke poured from the vent of the volcano, streams of water hurled up from river beds flooded over their banks and came down.

It seemed as if everything at the top of the mountain was coming down upon Frank and Barney as they ran.

Down in the valley Frank feared that the coach would be overtaken unawares by the down-sweeping rocks and buried with its inmates.

This impression had hardly occurred to him, though, when the whirlwind shot out from amid the trees just ahead of them!

"Barney!" shouted the amazed Frank, "go for the coach. It is our only chance for life perhaps, for the avalanche is upon us!"

With the roar of a million demons the rocks came thundering up to them, as they started for the coach.

CHAPTER XVI.

POMP FALLS IN HIS OWN TRAP.

DR. VANEKKE was in the pilot-house of the

Whirlwind and he brought the electric coach to a pause the moment he saw Frank and Barney rushing toward it.

In an instant they were both on the platform at a bound and the professor did not wait to come in, but he turned the coach, and putting on speed, he sent it flying down into the valley again at a fearful rate.

The avalanche came with a noise and fury that was fearful just behind the coach, stones and rocks striking against the wheels with a dangerous rattle that showed them they were not an instant too soon at escaping.

Indeed, had it not been for the fearful speed at which the coach was dashing along, the worst of the avalanche would have overtaken them and destroyed the Whirlwind.

The volcanic thunder and shaking of the mountain continued to get worse momentarily, the dense volumes of smoke pouring from the mouth of the crater kept increasing, and all around them dirt and rocks were loosened and went rolling down to the valley with the flying coach.

The afternoon sun was declining, and it shed a golden veil over the basin between the four mountains, down in which reposed the isle of diamonds, of which they were in search.

Frank and Barney entered the pilot-house. The Irishman yet clung to his string of fish, but Frank had left his behind at the mountain stream.

Barney's arm pained him too, as it will be recollect he got an arrow through it by one of the swamp-dwellers, but he was so much excited that he paid no heed to his misery.

The doctor then told Frank how he chanced to appear with the coach.

"At the first indication of the earthquake," said he, "I anticipated an avalanche, and knew your danger would be fearful. So I started up to meet you, and—"

Boom! Boom! came a thunderous report, interrupting him.

A great fissure in the earth opened behind them. It ran for miles along the mountain side, the internal gases escaping with a deafening roar, trees and rocks were blown high in the stifling air, and a dense cloud of vapor and dust arose.

"On, on! Faster—faster!" gasped the doctor, as the shock flung him and Frank over. "Other yawning chasms may open ahead!"

Frank increased the speed of the coach and glanced back.

"Thank Heaven the earth was rent in back of us!" he gasped.

"Ah—you mean—"

"I mean that the flying stones and rocks now fall into the great crevice that yawns across their path downward in pursuit of us, and we no longer run the risk of being crushed by them."

Frank told the truth.

The down-coming landslide and rocks had their furious rush arrested at the yawning fissure, into which they fell with a fearful crashing and pounding that could be heard for miles around.

It was a grand but terrifying sight.

Yet they soon lost view of it, for the rattling, bouncing and flying coach quickly reached the valley, and plunging into a sandy plain that might once have been the bed of a dried-up lake, she went along as smoothly as if on a macadamized road.

Her wild flight had severely shaken up her passengers, for in their hurry they could not be particular about avoiding the rough ground, and mountain sides are not the smoothest places in the world.

The disturbance above the earthquake fissure continued for some time, but the occupants of the Whirlwind were then too far removed from it to suffer any evil consequences.

From their elevated position up on the mountain Frank had seen the simmering waters of a

vast lake down in the valley, and came to the conclusion that it contained the isle of diamonds.

Consequently when the Whirlwind crossed the sandy desert, he kept it in the direction of the lake, and they passed into a canyon which had the appearance of once having been a water-course that was now partly dried up.

By that time night began to fall.

"We will not venture any further, doctor," said Frank, as he brought the Whirlwind to a pause some distance within the gloomy gorge. "It may be dangerous. We do not know what lurking mischief may beset our path ahead. Moreover, we are close upon the hostile ground of the diamond islanders."

"This gorge ought to lead us to the lake, Frank."

"If it goes straight ahead it would, but it may be winding."

"Well, as we are surrounded by high hills, and the canyon is the only opening in them leading toward the lake, we have no choice in the matter but to follow it."

Just then Pomp opened the door and announced supper.

Frank and the doctor passed into the dining-room in the coach, where they found Panchita, Barney and Fitzgerald seated, while Pomp bustled about, waiting on them.

There was a tiny stream running from a spring amid some tall palms near where the coach came to a pause, and the coon took a pitcher and went out to get some water from it.

As he bent over the spring he suddenly felt something come down on his head with the force of a cannon-ball.

It gave him a crack that fairly blinded him for an instant, and knocked him heels over head into the stream.

"Yah! Hole on dar, gosh blame yo!" he yelled, as he picked himself up, drenched, and cowered around, striking out with his fists.

To his amazement he did not see any one, but a broken cocoanut on the ground, and his wool sticky with its slimy unripe inside and juice showed him that it had come down on him from the tree overhead.

Instantly his fears were quelled.

"Wouldn't 'er happen ter nobuddy else!" he growled, as he glared up at the umbrella shaped top of the tree. "Golly, if dis chile didn't hab sich a tick skull, war he be now? De Lawd knows! Spec I'se gwine ter stan' dis all alone? H'm, h'm! Whar am Barney? I'se gwine ter fatch de ole Irisher out yere, an' make 'em peg a stone up at demfyre cocoanuts, an' if dey doan' break his head dis niggah's a liar, 'clar ter glory?"

Pomp chuckled over the prospect of having company in his misery, filled the pitcher, and ruefully rubbing his sore head, he tried to put on a careless air, whistled a tune, and returned to the coach.

Barney had finished his supper, and as he came in he hailed Pomp with:

"Come, come, nagur! Be afther hurryin' up wid ther wather, fer shure I'm that dihroy I eud dhrink ther lakes av Killarney impty, so I eud."

"Lawdy, Barney, den yo' oughter hab what I jest bin drinkin'," replied Pomp, rolling his eyes and smacking his lips.

"Is it whisky, ye rapscallion?"

"Better'n dat. Cold's ice, sah, an' jes' scrumptious, too."

"Then why don't yez give us a tashte, ye ould baboon?"

"G'way dar wif dem names, an' git it yo'self. Dar's milliyums ob dem on de trees outside. Git a stone an' frow it up at dem—dey'll come down."

"Cocoanuts, bedad!"

"H'm, h'm."

"Shure I'll throy wan. I've tasted thim afore, aoso I have."

Barney knew how delicious they were, and went out to the trees.

It was only a moment afterwards that Pomp followed him, with a broad grin on his face, expecting to see Barney get pulverized.

"Shake de tree, chile, shake de tree!" he cried encouragingly as the Irishman got under the spreading leaves.

"Howld yer wist; sure, yez can't taich an Irishman ter pick cocoanuts," said Barney contemptuously. "Shure, I wuz bring up ter gatherin' them in schwate Clonakilty. Watch me, ye nagur, an' I'll show yez ther grip!"

He spit on his hands, gave a hoist at his pants, and grabbed the tree trunk.

Then he gave it a jerk.

It did not even quiver.

He tried again, and pulled so hard his face nearly exploded.

But a cocoa palm, though slender and tall, is as firm as a steel rod.

"Bejabers," grunted Barney, "it's petrified ther tree is entoired."

"Den frow up a stone," grinned Pomp.

Barney did not want to make a fool of himself, so he picked up a stone and let it fly at several dark, clustering objects which he beheld up in the dark green foliage.

Biff! went the stone, and a terrific chorus of yells arose from several monkeys he hit, and ere they could get out of the way, the spiteful little beasts let drive a shower of cocoanuts at them.

They were up in the trees, and having plenty of missiles, Barney and Pomp were bombarded unmercifully.

They yelled and roared and danced, as nut after nut whacked them, for the chattering monkeys fired with remarkable precision.

"Sabe me!" bellowed Pomp wildly, as he realized that he was caught in his own trap. "Oh! Ouch! Stop dat, yo' little—oh, oh, oh!"

"Be heavens, I'm a dead man! Fer ther love av God, spake to yer ancesthors an' tell 'em it's us!" roared Barney.

They could not stand the bombardment much longer, nor could they retaliate, so they took to their legs and fled, leaving the monkeys masters of the situation and pleased at the result.

Into the coach they rushed a moment afterward, and scared its inmates into the belief that some great danger threatened them.

Crestfallen as they were, daubed with green cocoanut slime, sore from the pelting, and angry at each other, they both were shrewd enough to refrain from telling what happened, thereby saving a laugh at their expense.

CHAPTER XVII.

A TROOP OF SHADOWS.

"Doctor," said Frank, after supper had been partaken of, "if you will go with me, I would like to take a trip on foot through the gorge a short distance, to see how the land lays ahead."

"Certainly I will go," replied Vaneyke. "It is a good forethought, too, for we cannot tell what danger we have to apprehend."

"Will you remain with Barney and Pomp to guard the coach, Fitzgerald?" asked Frank of the Englishman.

"Assuredly," responded the ranchman; "and at the same time, I can keep an eye upon my future bride, to see that no more giants come along, fall in love with 'er and carry the lady away."

Frank and the professor then armed themselves and left the coach, followed the course of the ravine, and soon disappeared from view around a bend some distance ahead.

Finding that he would prefer to be alone with Panchita, the young ranchman proposed a stroll out to the sandy desert, to which the girl readily assented, to view the eruption.

The Irishman and the coon winked knowingly at

each other as the lovers strolled away, with the pretext that they wanted to watch the reflected flames that were then arising from the volcano, and spreading a lurid crimson glow over the sky.

"Bejabers, it wuz young we wanst wuz ourselves," said Barney; "an' be ther poiper av Moses, I'm afeerd as it's little av any other sparkin' they'll see but what goes on betune the two av thimselfes!"

"Kinder lonesome heah now, chile," said Pomp.

"Then let's be aither amusin' ourselves, shure."

"S'posen I git out de old banjo, Barney."

"Faix, an' I'll saw me fiddle wid yer, on a bet."

"Bet, honey? Wha' yo' mean, h'm?"

"That I play me fiddle an' bate yer widout a jury."

"Yo' play bettern me? Sho'! Glory dar, chile! Yo' can't do it."

"Then, begob, it's put up or shut up wid yer!"

"Name de conditions an' I go yo'," said Pomp, getting riled.

"I will. It's even money that I can get ter me locker, grab me fiddle, chune up, an' play foive pieces afore ye can get yer banjo an' thump out wan av yer camp-meetin' songs."

Pomp stood on his dignity at once, for he pulled out a ten-dollar bill, planked it down on the table, and said, vehemently:

"Done, done! Cover de green-back, an' I take de conceit out ob yo'!"

Down went Barney's money on top of it, and he exclaimed:

"Whin I say three roon."

"G'wan!"

"Wan—two—three!"

They both rushed into the next compartment, and Barney hauled an antiquated fiddle, which he usually carried with him on his travels, out of his locker, and darted back again into the dining-room, where he sat down and tuned up.

A moment later away scraped the bow across the strings, and he rattled out the Widow McCree, the Irish Washerwoman, and Kathleen Mavourneen in quick succession.

Pomp, meantime, was in the other room swearing and furious, as he frantically rummaged in his locker for the banjo.

He could not find it.

Fast and furious sawed the rollicking Irishman's bow, commencing on the fourth tune, and Pomp broke out in a cold sweat.

"Hull on dar, Barney!" he yelled. "Yo' done cuttin' de pieces short!"

"Git out wid yer," chuckled Shea. "This is number four, bedad, an' it's on ther fifth wan I now am, be ther same token."

"Whar am dat banjo?" howled Pomp, frantically. Tweedle-de-de, squeaked the violin, and as the last tune came to an end, Barney burst into a roar of laughter, paused, seized the stakes, and shouted:

"Done! Ther money is mine, an', bejabers, ye'll foind yer ould instermint under ther flure, where I hid it, yer gorilla."

"Whoop!" roared Pomp, collapsing. "I'se done fo' again, by golly!"

He got it out, came into the dining compartment, and solemnly shook hands with Barney, a sickly grin on his awful mouth.

"Ain't gwine ter say nuffin," he announced, "but I done git squar wif yo' honey. De bank note am yo's."

"Shure I have it already," interrupted Barney, with a broad grin.

"But," added Pomp, sadly, "it am a counterfeit."

Barney's jaw dropped.

He glanced at the bill.

It was on the Marine Bank, New York, letter A, dated July 1st, 1865.

"Shure an' it's quits we are," said he, glumly, for Pomp had not lied.

Then they glanced at each other, and both had to burst out laughing.

"Dar am no use, kain't stay mad at yo', Barney," said Pomp.

"Then schtrung up, ye blackguard, an' we'll have a duet."

A few moments later the violin was venting a jig, and the old coon was thumping an accompaniment in masterly style on the banjo.

The rattling refrain was turned into a song a few minutes later, and filled with ecstasy, and carried away with the music, Pomp began to roar:

"Lubed a little yaller gal, an' Lingo was her name, 'Nodder niggah came along an' lubbed her jes' de same,

"Way down in Alabam". Niggah had a razor an' dis coon he hab a club, Swar he'd cut my gizzard out, to steal de gal I lub, 'Way down in Alabam'.

When we come tergeder, holy smoke, de wool did fly;

Niggah cut me deep, an' den I socked him in de eye, 'Way down in Alabam'.

Lingo drawed a poker, an' she put der coon ter sleep, Couldn't stay dar longer, in de Norf we had ter keep,

Lef' ole Alabam'!"

The tremendous noise made by the darky's voice, the scraping of the violin, and the thumping of the banjo drowned every other sound, and left the two men in blissful ignorance of the fact that the distant voices of Panchita and Fitzgerald had been crying for help.

The windows were all open, and so were the doors.

Barney sat near the rear door, and as the song ended he happened to glance out, when he gave a violent start, and bending over he peered through the gloom harder.

"A movin' shadder!" he exclaimed, dropping his violin.

"Huh? Wha' yo' say?" asked Pomp in startled tones, as he laid down his banjo and peered over Barney's shoulder.

"Clap yer oye beyant ag'in' the opposite wall."

"Lawd amasey—what am dem tings a-movin' dar, Barney?"

"Shure me oyes don't be giblets, so they ain't, an' can't bore troo ther gloom, yer see, but, begob, I have me suspicions."

"H'm! Looker dar, more ob dem!"

"Shut ivery thing up, quick, an' I'll be aither turnin' ther search-loight upon them. Man or baste though they are, shure an' it's ther quare precession av shadders they makes in ther gloom."

It was so dark across the canyon that they could not well distinguish anything entirely, but they faintly made out what seemed to be a string of shadowy forms passing by.

While Pomp was hastily closing up windows and doors Barney ran into the pilot house, and turning a lever he started the powerful searchlight and it shot a streak across the canyon.

The radiance was as powerful when it struck the wall as if the noonday sun was gleaming.

Just then Pomp ran into the pilot-house.

A cry pealed from the lips of the two watchers. Stalking along with majestic mien and stately grace was a band of gigantic men, in appearance exactly like Isaac was.

There was not a man in the party who was less than seven feet in height, and as the terrible glare of the electric light flashed blindingly in their eyes they all involuntarily paused.

It was evident that they were excessively startled.

But no more so than Barney and Pomp were.

For they saw that the white savages held Panchita and Fitzgerald captives, and were carrying them away through the canyon.

"Isaac's throibe," involuntarily cried Barney.

"Golly, de white niggahs hab got de gal an' de ranchman."

"Luck at ther soize av them."

"Wha' we'se gwine ter do, Barney?"

"Do? Tackle him, be jabers."

"Um! um! See dar, dey am talkin' an' pointin' dis way."

"Is everything closed up?"

"H'm, h'm!"

"Then get yer gun an' stand ready ter lind me a hand."

As Barney spoke he turned lever No. 1 and grasped the wheel.

The coach started toward the natives, and the moment they saw that the strange object was coming they fled along the ravine at an amazing rate of speed.

The road-bed was so rocky that Barney did not dare to put on much speed, and the giants gradually forged ahead until they were several hundred yards in advance with the prisoners.

The search light would keep them in sight for a mile, though, and the moment Barney saw an opportunity of dashing ahead he made up his mind to run them down.

"Shure, it's cowld mate they may make av ther young couple," he muttered, "an' I won't admit av that, begorra, if I have ter shoot them down wid me own hands."

A clear spot soon showed up ahead, and with this chance in his grasp Barney started the coach ahead at full speed.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ON THE ISLE OF DIAMONDS.

FRANK and Vaneyke had gone on their way unconscious of the trouble brewing in the vicinage of the electric coach, and followed the tortuous windings of the gloomy canyon for fully a mile.

Then they emerged upon a level plateau, below which they saw the gleaming surface of a huge body of water.

In the middle of it was a small mountain arising like some great sentinel, its wooded slopes scarcely more than half a mile from the mainland.

"The Isle of Diamonds!" exclaimed Frank, the moment his glance fell upon it. "See, doctor, see! Our journey is ended!"

"Marvelous—wonderful!" ejaculated Vaneyke. His expressions of wonderment were called forth by the fact that the lake was bridged over at intervals by masonry of ancient Egyptian style of architecture beautiful to behold, while the shores of the island itself were seen to be walled up all around with stone.

On the graceful undulations on one side of the hill the newly risen moon slanted its rays upon a city of pure white stone.

The architecture was massive, great pillars and columns rising, clearly outlined, and here and there turrets, domes and spires arose above the rest of the buildings, lending it a strange effect.

"There is something strange in the fact of these uncivilized savages exhibiting such wonderful skill in building," said Frank, "yet the scene presented to our glance only verifies the account given by Mr. King, the father of Panchita."

"True, true, Frank. It is undoubtedly the Isle of Diamonds—the strange abode of the giant race to which Isaac belongs."

"But how under the sun can we penetrate such a wonderful city, teeming with a powerful race of people, who would guard their treasure with their lives, and hope to wrest from them an iota of the diamonds without falling victims to our own temerity?"

"To deliberately attack these people with the purpose in view of taking their diamonds is simply and purely rank robbery."

"Decidedly so," assented Frank, "and I will not do it."

"Then, as you perceive, our journey is fruitless."

"Pause, doctor, and recollect Frasculo, the bandit chief."

"I do not forget the Mexican wretch."

"You know that he and his men are on their way here."

"But what can they hope for?"

"Nothing, when they see what they will have to assail."

"You speak meaningly, Frank."

"Of course I do. We will capture them."

"Oh! Aid the islanders, instead of molesting them?"

"If it becomes necessary."

"With all my heart, if we can let the savages know our intentions."

"And that will not be difficult if we can meet Isaac."

It seemed almost miraculous, but the last words had hardly left Frank's lips when a shadow fell in front of them, and glancing up they were both startled and astonished to see Isaac standing there.

His approach had been as silent as death.

The plumes in his head gear nodded to the fragrant breeze, and he regarded them silently with folded arms, looking more like some mighty statue carved out of marble than a human being.

"Isaac, by heavens!" exclaimed Frank.

"He is a demon!" ejaculated the doctor.

The savage did not say a word, but there was an intent and querulous look in his blue eyes, as he fastened them on Frank.

"Where did you come from?" asked the young inventor in Spanish.

"I have been following your strange wagon," replied Isaac.

"You followed us from the place where we killed the jaguars?"

"Evsy step, on foot. Why did you come here?"

"To penetrate your city."

Isaac frowned darkly.

"Others have done so," said he, "but in ages only one man ever escaped from there with his life."

"His name was King?"

"Yes. Did you know him?"

"He is the father of the girl you stole."

"Ah! What strange fatality is this?"

"Time alone will tell. We will warn you now."

"Against what?"

"Frasculo and his men."

"The Mexican from whose knife you saved my life?"

"Yes. He is on his way here to rob your city."

The dark frown upon Isaac's brow intensified, and he asked, after a pause:

"Why do you tell me this?"

"In truth, we came for the same purpose," said Frank, "but I will admit to you now that since we have just seen the barbaric splendor of your wonderful isle, we cannot help feeling that such a course would be wanton robbery."

"If you could accomplish your purpose, you mean," said Isaac, with a significant smile.

"My friend, we are disappointed. We started in expectation of meeting with savages in their primitive state, ignorant, blood-thirsty and unscrupulous. Instead, here we find your people to be in advance of the native Aztecs. You have built bridges, palaces, houses and temples with the wonderful skill of the ancient Egyptians. Isolated from civilization as you are, it is no wonder to me that your people retain their native habits."

"You speak well of us," gravely answered the white savage. "We keep to our inherited, time-honored customs, and though but a small race of people, we are powerful, and dislike all other tribes. Here we live in peace and happiness, the bridges giving us access to the main, where we to Fitzgerald, and asked:

roam the surrounding hunting grounds and keep our houses provisioned. But woe unto him who dares molest or cross us!"

"Then Frasculo can expect a warm reception?"

"Since you warned me in time, yes. I thank you for telling me."

"And as we are mortal foes of the Mexican, we will aid you to repel him."

"You are kind; but you will want an ample reward for this?"

"Nothing more than the body of Frasculo, alive."

"For what purpose?"

"To deliver him up to the law of my country."

"Good! I shall keep faith with you upon that score."

"Let us take leave of you now."

"Where are your wagon and your friends?"

"In the gorge, and there we will remain until Frasculo comes."

"Would you not like to go with me to view my domain?"

"Yours?"

"I am the chief of the tribe."

"Indeed? You amaze me. Lead on, we will follow you."

The giant strode down to the lake shore, followed by Frank and the doctor, and going on to the nearest bridge, as they advanced the figure of a sentry armed with a spear suddenly and unexpectedly emanated from an aperture where he had been hidden and stood before them.

"You see how well guarded every approach to our city is," said Isaac, turning to Frank. "Were I not with you, both of you would perish."

He made a gesture to the sentry, and the man stood aside with such a submissive air that our friends could not doubt that Isaac was a potentate of this strange place.

Then the three continued on, and a second sentry was met at the terminus of the bridge, who acted exactly as the first had done.

Upon the waters of the beautiful lake, and moored along the shores of the island, were numerous gondola-shaped boats.

They were doubtless used for fishing purposes.

As soon as the trio stepped from the bridge they found themselves in a paved, narrow street of the city.

It had a most Oriental appearance.

Not a sign of an animal was to be seen, nor was there a soul in the silent street.

Frank and the doctor bent the keenest glances around, and as the silvery moonlight glanced upon the pillars and porticos of the houses, the most brilliant scintillations were flashed back from the diamonds incrusted there to embellish the carved tracery.

Every house they passed was thus adorned with the most magnificent jewels, rendering a sublime effect, and clearly demonstrating that theft in this isolated city was a crime that was unknown.

Isaac led them to the largest and most imposing edifice in the city without saying a word, but covertly watching their looks of evident admiration all the while.

As they came to a pause at the entrance of the building, the clatter of many footsteps and the voices of a number of men were heard approaching.

Frank and the doctor glanced hastily around just as a dozen giants looking like Isaac rushed up to them.

They had Fitzgerald and Panchita.

"Ha! What treachery is this?" cried Frank, recognizing the captives.

The new-comers spoke to Isaac in some strange language, in hasty tones, and Vaneyke turned

"How is it you are prisoners in the hands of these people?"

"We left the coach for a stroll, when they captured us in the gorge," replied Fitzgerald. "The negro and Irishman pursued us in the Whirlwind."

"And where are they now?"

"Fully a score of the giants were fighting them in the gorge, but escaped."

"Isaac!" sternly exclaimed Frank, who heard what was said. "Release them!"

"No!" vehemently cried the giant, his eyes sparkling as they rested upon Panchita. "Fate has given the girl whom I love better than life to me!"

"You refuse?" sharply questioned Frank, drawing his revolver.

"I would sooner die!" passionately exclaimed the giant.

"Then so be it!" cried Frank, covering Isaac with his pistol.

"Seize these men, and make them prisoners!" the giant cried to his men.

They started toward Frank and the doctor to carry out their chief's command.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE FLIGHT UP THE MOUNTAIN.

ALTHOUGH there were a dozen giants opposed to Frank and the doctor, they did not flinch, for it was evident that the fanatic love Isaac entertained for Panchita would impel him to hold her.

Fitzgerald and the girl laid on the ground, utterly helpless, and although Isaac knew that death stared him in the face when he saw Frank's pistol pointed at his head, he showed no signs of fear.

"Stop your men, or I will kill you!" cried Frank.

The men evidently understood Spanish, for they did not wait for Isaac to give them a command, but paused of their own accord.

A proud, disdainful smile crossed Isaac's face, and he made a gesture to his men, and said to them, calmly:

"Obey me! I have no fear of death!"

"Of what avail is this girl's love if you are a corpse?" asked Frank, in contemptuous tones. "You do not speak with reason."

"No power on earth shall gainsay my commands!"

"See here, Isaac, you must obey me. Liberate my friends and let us return to the main. We will go away and you can then fight off Frascuelo alone when he comes."

"I cannot let you go. The girl I must and will espouse, and then you all may depart in peace. Attempt to thwart me, and you will make me an enemy. You saved my life, and you have rendered me another favor by warning me against the Mexican bandit. I am very grateful. Yet my love for my affinity is greater than my immense gratitude to you."

"Then you are determined to hold us, and excite my enmity?"

"Nothing will alter my resolve!"

"Very well, it shall be war to the knife between us henceforth!"

Isaac made an impatient gesture to his men, and again they started toward Frank and the doctor, when they both swung around their weapons and opened fire on the giants.

They did not fire to kill, but not a shot failed to wound a man, and although several spears were hurled at our two plucky friends, they escaped with the most trifling flesh wounds.

Ten of the giants fell before the rapid firing of the weapons, and two ran away to summon assistance.

Isaac stood as if paralyzed.

He could not realize what occurred; it all happened so quick.

And before he recovered from his amazement, Vaneyke had cut the bonds of Fitzgerald, and thrust a revolver in his hand, while Frank liberated Panchita, and assisted her to her feet.

"Fly!" exclaimed Frank, glancing around. "Do not lose a moment. They will get help. Once surrounded, we cannot cut our way out."

Just then there sounded the braying of a reed horn, and the muffled beating of drums all over the sleeping city.

"Crowds are swarming to the bridges!" exclaimed Vaneyke, whose keen glance was fastened upon the water front.

Isaac's face was convulsed with ungovernable rage.

He raised his bent arms up over his head, and while his gigantic frame shook and trembled with suppressed excitement, he cried in deep, hoarse tones:

"May the curses of a king blight you! Escape is impossible! Every bridge is guarded. Every avenue of flight over the lake is cut off! You are bound to fall into my power! I swear it!"

"But not yet!" said Frank. He strode over to Isaac, and grasped him by the throat.

Before the astonished man could resist, the doctor and the ranchman ran to Frank's assistance, when they overpowered the giant, and tied him to a post with strips torn from his own clothes.

The next moment they fled, leaving him vainly striving to burst his bonds, for they saw that the city was becoming alive with men, women and children, all of massive proportions. "Follow me!" exclaimed Frank. "There is no escape to the main but we can get up on the mountain, and there perhaps may elude them, or hold them at bay. It is our only chance!"

They turned through a narrow, dark street at the side of the palace, and saw that it ascended the hill.

Fortunately it was an unfrequented street, and they reached the end of it without being discovered.

There was a dense jungle at the suburbs of the city, and as they plunged into it they could hear the tan-tivvy of the horns and the rumble of the drums down in the city mingling with excited voices that created a veritable pandemonium.

But for the present they were safe.

Buried in the tall, waving grass that was higher than their heads, they could see the sky illuminated across the lake where the volcano flung up its crimson glow to the clouds.

"We had better push on," said Frank, when they had rested a short time. "No doubt the direction of our flight will soon be discovered or suspected. Then they will pursue us. A fight in this jungle would be disastrous to us all."

"You are right," assented the doctor. "This must be a volcanic island, lying between the four mountains as it does."

"But this race of giants—what of them?" asked Frank.

"It is a matter of mystery to me. That they are a distinct race is evident, for the men, women, and children are all giants. Moreover, they are Jews. You can see it in their faces. Besides that, when Isaac spoke to his men, he addressed them in Hebrew, and called them by old biblical names, such as Ishmael, Balak, Saul and Og."

"Og?" echoed Frank, thoughtfully. "By jingo, I've got the key to explain their size, if they are descendants of the ancient Israelites."

In 1452 B. C. there was an Amorite chief, ruling from the Jabbock to the foot of Hermon, and his name was Og. He was one of a giant race of Rephaim, whose stronghold was a remarkable district called Argob by the Hebrews, which means the stony. His iron bedstead was nine cubits long by four wide. I'm under the impression that the tribe on this isle are descendants of his race."

"Perhaps so. Ah, here is a clearing," replied Vaneyke.

Fitzgerald had been supporting Panchita, and was going on ahead, when they emerged into a cluster of tall, stately palms.

Just beyond the trees a mountain stream went rippling over the stones in a wild, rocky section, and from there they had a clear, uninterrupted view of the entire city below them, as the streets ran parallel and horizontal.

The scene that met their view was discouraging.

Torch lights were flashing to and fro in almost every street, and thousands upon thousands of people were to be seen flitting about, while here and there they beheld lights glowing in the gondola-like boats on the lake as they were rowed out on the water, and began to go around the island.

"The whole city is aroused," grimly commented Frank. "They will get up a hot hunt after us soon. Eventually we may be taken in captivity. Therefore, should we be obliged to shoot them, friends, be careful not to kill anyone, for they would be apt to avenge a death by sacrificing our lives."

"For my part, I don't care, you know," said Fitzgerald, with a frown. "It's deuced awkward, me dear fellow, to love a girl and 'ave an infernal white savage try to steal 'er bodily. Positively, I will kill the beggar before I allow 'im to do it again."

"I wouldn't blame you a bit," said Frank, "but by the use of a little discretion we may get out of this scrape unhurt."

"Oh, it's of no use. I can't restrain my feelings, don't you know. A chap that loves as I love Panchita must 'ave 'is girl or die."

"Hang Isaac!" muttered Frank. "If I was in poor Fitzgerald's boots I'd shoot the fanatic wretch any way."

"Hark!" exclaimed Panchita, holding up her finger and bending over in an attitude of listening. "I hear footsteps coming."

"Scatter behind the rocks!" exclaimed Frank.

They dispersed like so many shadows, and a moment after they were all concealed behind the bowlders.

Several minutes passed by of utter silence.

Then the jungle grass parted at the exact spot where the fugitives had come through, and as Frank peered over the top of the rock behind which he lay, he saw half a dozen of the giants come out amid the trees.

"They have followed our trail through the grass!" thought Frank. "The beaten down blades left a passage which we came through, and it was easy for them to follow it."

The men grouped themselves in a bunch and held a whispered conversation for a while, in the meantime glancing around much as if they were at a loss to know exactly in which direction to go, now that the trail was lost.

Then they separated, spreading out in the form of a half circle, and came through the trees toward the rocks.

"In a moment they will see us!" thought Frank despairingly, "and then a fight will be inevitable!"

He gave utterance to a guarded hiss to warn the others to be on their guard, and drew up

his repeating rifle prepared to fight to the bitter end rather than submit to capture and endure a fate that might be worse than death.

The others heard his warning and looked up.

The natives saw them, uttered a cry, and dashed forward.

Three reports pealed out, and with the cries of the men who were wounded, they went echoing down the mountain side to apprise the whole city of where the fugitives were located.

CHAPTER XX.

A WAR-CLOUD APPEARS.

BARNEY and Pomp were cast in a fever of excitement upon seeing Panchita and Fitzgerald in the hands of the diamond islanders, distancing them, and opened fire on the running men.

But the giants suddenly vanished behind a rocky ledge in the ravine, and Barney brought the electric coach to a pause.

"Bedad, it's garn they are, Pomp, Acushla!" he exclaimed in disgusted tones; "and shure it's niver agin we'll be after seein' thim. Och worra, worra, an' what did ther young spal-peens lave us fer at all, at all?"

"Lord amassy, an' we kain't go no furder, chile, 'kase Massa Frank an' de doctor come back an' won't know whar de coach am if we do," groaned Pomp dismally.

"But luck beyant there; what is that—ther wather?"

"Golly, mus' be de end ob de canyon."

"Then it's ahead I'll be after goin' wid ther coach, an' it's at the ind av ther ravine we can schtay ontill Frank comes back."

"Drike her on den, honey, an' I keep my wed-der eye peeled fo' de white niggahs wid de In-jun top-knots."

Barney turned the lever, the electric current started the coach again, and seizing the wheel, he steered for the opening.

They arrived there just as the giants reached the city, and when the lights began to flare up they saw that some unusual excitement was going on.

"There's wan thing sure in me moind," said Barney, "an' that is that Masther Frank must have crossed wan av thim bridges."

Bang! Bang! Bang! sounded the shots in the city just then which Frank and Vaneyke fired in front of the palace.

"Ki dar! Yo' heah dat?" demanded Pomp.

"Roifles, or I'm a Guinea!"

"Tain't Fitzgerald, chile, 'kase he didn't hab none."

"Then, be heavens, it's Frank an' ther docthor, God save 'em!"

"Ye gwine ter stay yere, an' le' dem git killed, Barney?"

"Be ther powers, no! We'll dhroive ther coach over the bridge yondher."

And away started the Whirlwind again, down the incline to the lake shore, and with a rush it went out on the bridge, the plucky negro and Irishman resolved to sell their lives to save Frank's.

The sentry rushed out of his covert, and sped along in fright, but with a yell of delight Barney put on more speed, and the Whirlwind gained on the man, and the cow-catcher struck him.

His body flew up in the air, he spun around and around, and striking the water, he disappeared beneath the surface.

"Hurroo!" yelled Barney, delightedly. "Give us another wan loike him, an' bejabbers we'll have a nate meal for a brace av crocodiles!"

The electric sparks gushed out of the driving rods, and snapped and cracked along the connections under the body of the coach, the loud fast approaching the top.

toned gong began to ring and clatter, and the broad wheels fairly buzzed as the coach sped along.

When the island end of the bridge was reached, the other sentry darted out in front of the flying coach.

He was found afterwards lying senseless in the street.

Thousands of glaring torches were flickering all over the streets in the hands of the startled islanders, and the people fled with wild cries in every direction as the glaring search light of the coach flashed blindingly in their eyes.

Along the central street tore the coach, everybody terrified at its fearful appearance, and Barney and Pomp laughed at their terror, watched everything they encountered, and listened for some token to guide them to their friends.

When they reached the palace, Isaac saw them.

There was a vast multitude congregated before the grand edifice, every pillow and stone of which was inlaid with diamond figures that flashed and sparkled in a thousand prismatic hues.

The gorgeous magnificence of the carvings and the blinding brilliancy of the pure gems amazed the two inmates of the coach.

Such a lavish display of wondrous wealth could only be dreamed of as some fairy vision of another world, for no matter in which direction they turned, the same dazzling glitter met their view.

No other ornaments adorned the persons of the white savages, and the same marvellous display on a much grander scale must have been seen within the massive white stone dwellings.

"Begob, ther wealth av this people is terrible—terrible!" gasped Barney.

"An' dar am mo' people heah den we kin lick ter git it, honey," said Pomp.

"Be St. Patrick's pig, there's Isaac schtan'd in ther dure av that palace."

"Sho' nough, an' he am sickin' de hull crowd at us."

The stately chief had been liberated from the post to which Frank and his friends had bound him, and was then trying to quell the fears of his people for the blazing coach.

To show them he was not afraid of it, he set them an example by darting out toward it, but the coach flashed by the big fellow and, striking in the midst of the crowd, the giants were moved and scattered like chaff before the wind.

The whirlwind cut a passage through the living mass, and when the rest saw how irresistible it was, they scattered and fled.

Straight through the city rushed the coach like a demon, carrying terror everywhere it went, and the two occupants saw no sign of their friends, when the gravest fears began to assail them.

"Shure, an' I hope narin' has happened 'em," said Barney.

"Mus' be heah," added Barney, hopefully. "We done heah de rifles."

"Hark! What's that firin' up on the hill?" They heard the reports of the weapons in the hands of Frank's party as they fired at the men who had tracked them.

"Nobuddy but Massa Frank an' de doctor hab guns," said Pomp.

"Then shure it's thimself we hears be ther same token!"

There was a well defined road going up the hill in continuation of the street they were on, and by following it, they soon found themselves

The higher they ascended, the nearer the shots sounded, and the rougher the road became, and g'ancing back, they saw hundreds of the natives going up the hills by various roads at full speed.

"They hears ther shots too, an' be's goin' ter take a hand in ther ruction," said Barney "but be heavens if we foinds as it's Frank an' ther professor, it's an illgant likken' we'll be after givin' thim."

A few moments later the road made a sharp turn, and they came in sight of their besieged friends.

"Dar am Fitzgerald an' de gal!" exclaimed Pomp excitedly, as he pointed at our friends who were crouching behind the rocks ahead and blazing away at the white savages whose numbers were fast increasing.

"Me blessin's be upon Masther Frank! Shure the young buck must a' saved them from these rapscallions! Hay thare!"

He started the gong ringing as the coach sped forward, and the besieged party turning around saw the coach coming.

A cheer burst from their lips, for they were hard pressed.

The air was fairly black with flying spears and arrows as the coach went buzzing up to where Frank's party was sheltered.

Hundreds of the weapons harmlessly struck against the coach and broke.

The moment the Whirlwind was close to Frank's party, it stopped.

Open went the rear door, and in came the four.

"Safe!" exclaimed Frank breathlessly.

He felt as if he were behind the protecting walls of a fort in the coach.

Assuming command of it at once, he posted the rest at the rifle holes in the windows, and as all the shutters of woven steel were down to guard the glasses, he had no fear of injury to any of the party.

Their enemies evinced their chagrin and rage by the fiercest cries, but immense as their numbers were, they did not dare to approach the coach.

They had already seen what its terrible power was.

Frank turned the Whirlwind around.

"We will retreat by the same path you came up!" he exclaimed. "for it is simply useless for us to give battle to these people."

"A needless sacrifice of their lives," assented Dr. Vaneyke.

"They are still coming up from the city by hundreds," exclaimed Fitzgerald, who was watching out a rifle-port, "and if we remain much longer, the crowd surrounding the coach will become so dense nothing could cut through it."

Frank started the coach.

"Do not fire at them unless they get too dangerous," he cautioned.

A moment afterwards the Whirlwind went spinning down the hill pursued by a large body of the diamond-islanders.

They did not seem to be anxious to do anything save to keep it in sight, and as Frank headed for one of the bridges, on the side of the island that laid in back of the city, he suddenly descried a band of horsemen approaching it from the main.

A long, earnest look showed him that they were Mexicans, and that they were armed with rifles.

There were several hundreds of them, to all appearance, and it did not take Frank long to surmise who was leading them on.

The door leading from the pilot-house into the coach was open, and turning around, Frank pointed ahead, and exclaimed:

"There is going to be some terrible work here soon, for I see Frascuelo's band approaching, to attack the island."

The giants had evidently despaired their approaching foes, for the reed horns and drums pealed out their warning again, and the hillside became alive with the natives, all of whom seemed bent upon reaching the bridge toward which the Mexicans were coming.

The coach was scarcely thought of in view of the greater danger that now threatened them, and it went on to the foot of the hill.

CHAPTER XXI.

RUNNING A TERRIBLE GAUNTLET.

As the gloom of night was intensifying by the approach of day, the moon disappeared and the stars paled over the island.

A storm of wind and rain wailed over the scene, and availingly themselves of the darkness and uproar of the dark tempest, the Mexicans, under Frascuelo, reached the bridge by which they hoped to reach the island to wrest the giant's treasures from them.

As loud as the heaviest thunder, a yell of exultation arose from the black, storm-lashed waters of the lake on both sides of the bridge, which seemed alive with the native's boats.

The Mexicans were assailed immediately by the swarming multitudes, who in the fierce and maddened strife set all danger at defiance, for no sooner was Frascuelo's whole band well upon the bridge, when the natives opposed their advance, crowded their rear, clambered up the sides of the bridge, attacking on each flank with awful fury.

Fresh warriors instantly rushed into the places where their comrades fell, and those in the rear of the tumultuous mass crowded their companions in the front ranks resistlessly upon the compact enemy.

It was with difficulty that friend could be distinguished from foe in the darkness, a horrid clamor of clashing steel, the reports of firearms, and cries of pain, rage and exultation arose all over the bridge as the two hordes fought desperately for the supremacy.

Hundreds were struck down and hurled into the lake, some were seized on both sides and borne away captors, a few succeeded in breaking through each other's lines, and the remainder who were not fighting, dying, wounded or dead, clung together, exhausted and despairing, hoping and praying for victory.

The first gray of the lurid morning dawned upon a frightful scene, and the giants were driven back despite their fearful fight, while with but half his men alive, Frascuelo drove them back to the city, and there resumed the fight.

The storm had passed away, and the placid waters of the lake were strewn with every evidence of the awful battle.

Frank and his friends had watched the conflict with indifference.

They were not friends of either party.

The islanders wanted their lives, and the Mexicans hated them cordially.

"We might go away," said Frank, "but I want to see how the matter will terminate. Let us go to the city and wait."

Accordingly the coach was driven into the city, and as it came to a pause in an open square, in which a fountain was gushing up, Dr. Vaneyke pointed up at the volcano and said:

"I don't wish to alarm you, but ere many hours it is very evident to me that there will be a fearful eruption up there."

"And if it comes down upon us," added

Frank, "not much will be left of this wonderful place."

People were rushing into the city now, and the cries all over the island that arose swelled into a mournful hum like the dirge of a storm sweeping over the ocean.

It was not long ere the entire population swept into the city, all over which blazing torches were glaring fitfully, and then like an avalanche came the fighting men.

The din of the battle was fearful.

The streets were overrun with people.

Fires sprang up in the houses that were fitted with woodwork, and cast a lurid crimson glow over the doomed city.

The Mexicans fought like demons when they beheld the wonderful riches spread out so lavishly on all hands, and the battle might have gone on until there was not a living man left, had not Dr. Vaneyke's prediction been fulfilled.

There suddenly sounded an explosion that shook the earth to its center, which hurled down buildings, threw every one off his feet and overturned everything standing.

The volcano had burst into violent eruption.

An enormous cloud of dust was blown ten thousand feet in the air, and as the fiery lava gushed up and illuminated the vapor and smoke that accompanied it, there was an appearance as if mighty flames were flashing their forked tongues high upward.

In reality these supposititious flames are only the reflection of the burning lava, and not, as most people suppose, genuine fire.

The sky was blackened, but the earth for ten miles around was illuminated as if by daylight, and while a stifling heat rendered the atmosphere unbearable, the gases that arose were frightful.

Instantly the fight between the Mexicans and the natives stopped, and they fell upon their knees in the streets with blanched faces, cries of fear emanating from their pale lips, and supplications to God rang out on every hand for their salvation.

It was in vain.

A shower of dust and rocks, flying lava in a burning state and heated ashes began to fall all over the island, while the earth shook and rumbling noises like muttering thunder arose from beneath its crust.

"The volcano—is—upon—us!" gasped Frank.

He drove the coach through the broad portico of Isaac's palace and saw the giant in mortal combat with Frascuelo in the great flagged corridor, the roof of which was upheld by massive carved pillars.

Like two ancient gladiators of Rome in the time of Nero fought these massive leaders of two strong armies, each armed with knives.

Isaac had hurled his enemy down when the coach came in, and planted one knee upon Frascuelo's chest, his knife upraised to deal the bandit chief a fatal blow.

But the thunder of falling rocks on the roof, and the shrieks of woe from the kneeling people in the street arrested his arm.

He cried out in terror and bounded to his feet.

"God protect the just!" he screamed, raising his eyes and hands Heavenward for a moment,

and then, despite the peril, he rushed past the coach and out into the street and vanished.

The noise outside was appalling, and the vivid glare of the volcano increased as immense vertical fissures radiated from the cone down the mountain side, and vast lava streams gushed down them towards the lake, the heated waters of which now boiled.

Panchita was terrified, and clung to Fitzger-

ald, who tried to allay her fears, and Barney and Pomp said not a word, but kept glancing at Frank anxiously as he whispered to the doctor.

"Shall we remain under this protecting roof, or risk a dash through that down-pouring storm of fiery rocks and ashes to get away?" Frank was asking the doctor.

"It is an awful position," returned Vaneyke uneasily. "You can see for yourself that the people in the street who are kneeling are being pelted to death by the flying missiles, and that those who are flying for their lives find no safety in flight."

"Not a soul will survive, of the natives or Mexicans, unless they find a shelter as durable as this palace."

"No, for those awful noises we hear come from falling buildings that cannot stand the bombardment. By heaven, it seems as if the world was coming to an end!"

Like the roaring of artillery the rocks came down through the roof, and they realized that soon even the palace would not afford them any protection.

Indeed, a more terrifying danger soon showed itself.

The dust began to fall and settle thickly upon the city.

There was a probability of it burying the city to a depth of ten or fifteen feet, when they would smother, and the heated lava streams were gushing toward them across the lake threatening to dry up the water and burn them to death!

As soon as the fearful condition of affairs became manifest to all, and they saw that they could not possibly remain where they were much longer, it was decided to venture out, risk a run through the storm of flying missiles, and try to leave the island.

The coach was sent over to the portico, and its inmates shuddered at the terrible scene that met their view.

Not a soul was seen alive in the deserted streets, but everywhere their eyes went they beheld multitudes of dead people.

Many of the houses had fallen in ruins, and while some of the bridges were half demolished the waters of the lake were roaring, steaming and boiling as if set over a fire.

The woods on the mainland were in a blaze, the volcano was vomiting forth flaring lava, smoke and ashes, the air was filled with meteor-like particles and clouds of falling dust and ashes, and the earth was in a constant tremor from the quaking shocks.

A dull pall, and the silence of death overhung the houses, but at momentary intervals frightful concussions thundered out as rocks and boulders came screaming down from the murky sky and struck the streets and houses, shattering everything in their way.

The most infernal conception of hell could not have been worse, yet the unlucky inmates of the coach had to brave it, if they wished to get out of the jeweled palace before it fell on their heads.

They all had pale, drawn faces as the coach rushed out into the street, and Frank caught the lever, as he headed the coach for the nearest bridge, and put on full speed.

Then through the awful scene rushed the coach like a meteor at its most terrific rate of speed, threatened by a thousand terrors, and its inmates in expectation of death at any moment.

CHAPTER XXII.

ON THE BRINK OF DEATH.

TEN minutes after the Whirlwind shot out of Isaac's palace and headed for the nearest bridge,

through the fearful volcanic storm, it reached a point of safety on the main.

But the flying rocks and other missiles had battered and dented it almost beyond recognition.

The inmates were safe, however.

It was the most trying ordeal that Frank Reade, Jr., and his friends had ever passed through, but the coach was built to withstand the roughest treatment, and to this fact alone was their present safety due.

The coach came to a pause, fully ten miles not go anywhere near it until it subsided, they

"For when this eruption is over," said Frank, "and I have repaired the damage to the coach, we must return to the isle of diamonds and see what its fate is."

The rest readily agreed to this proposition.

A watch was posted for the rest of that fearful night, and worn out with fatigue, the tired adventurers had turned in to get some much needed rest.

The volcano was still in an active state of eruption when daylight came, and as they could

giant tarriers did wid us. Shure I wouldn't be afther waitin' ter see who is the heirs, but 'pon me worrud I'd nail ther schtuff, an' lave ther successors ter come back an' break their hearts over what we might be afther takin'."

"Couldn' spec' anyting me' from sich a bab-boon," said Pomp, in aggravating tones. "Nebber see a man wif a pug nose yit wot hab a conscience! Only de rest ob us gemmen got I done hate a thief!"

"Then why don't you return Barney's bag of



The coach started toward the natives, and the moment they saw that the strange object was coming they fled along the ravine at an amazing rate of speed. The road-bed was so rocky that Barney did not dare to put on much speed.

from the shore of the boiling lake, in a canyon that shut out the view of the eruptions of the volcano.

Here not a particle could reach them, and as the sun arose on a new day, and they found themselves safe, they alighted from the coach, and returned fervent thanks to God for their miraculous salvation from what seemed certain destruction.

The diamond city was in ruins.

Its inhabitants must all be dead, and Frasculo's band of Mexican bandits doubtless underwent the same fate.

Still there was no certainty of the deaths of either the bandit or the giant yet, as they were the last of their respective parties seen alive, during their combat in the palace portico.

Isaac had rushed out into the street, and they left Frasculo in the building when they fled in the coach.

The future alone would decide their fate.

mapped out a plan of procedure over their breakfast.

"If the entire city is not enveloped, and buried in the ashes and stones from the volcano," said Frank, "we can find it again, and as the entire race of giants seems to have been swept out of existence, no one but ourselves will own the treasures of the Isle of Diamonds. Therefore, if it is possible, we will return there, and exhume as much of the treasure as we can, and carry it away with us."

"But if some of the people are left?" queried the doctor.

"Then we can touch nothing, as the survivors will own what is left. We can learn the truth of that later on."

"Deuced awkward position to be placed in," muttered Fitzgerald. "We really can't tell what to do now, don't you know?"

"Bedad," said Barney, "it's schtandin' on a foiner feelin's in ther matther we are than them

smoking tobacco which I saw you pilfer from his pocket a while ago?" asked Panchita.

Pomp's jaw dropped, as the others began to laugh, and Barney's comical mug had a serene expression, as he said:

"Worked me terbaccy, did he? Shure he must have been dhrinking tar-heel rum, an' mistakin' me pocket fer a chicken coop, he kep' up his repertasion loike a ruffian. Faix, it do go ter show yez ther hypocrisy av ther nagur; he wouldn't stale a wathermelom, bedad—if ther owner wuz a lookin'. Take ther down-throdden Irishmon fer a sample av honesty is ther best policy shop—shure a son av the aould sod is so honest, that as soon as he comes to Ameriky, they makes a cop av him ter catch ther dishonest nagurs, so they do."

"De law am great," said Pomp, grinning. "I know dat dey hab to set a thief fo' ter catch a thief. Kidar, chile, whar am yo', huh?"

Leaving Barney and Pomp blackguarding

each other, Frank took a spy-glass, and climbing up on a high, rocky eminence, he directed the glass in the direction they came from.

Afar in the distance he saw the volcano belching out a lurid cloud, up into which flames seemed to leap and touch the sky, while down the side of the mountain crept the broad stream of crimson lava, rolling into the valley toward the lake.

Not a tree or shrub was to be seen on that side of the mountain, but the blackened and charred remains of some told where the fierce

valley, taking his bearings, and selecting a good place for encampment.

The valley was verdant, and full of streams, ponds, woods, and outcropping rocks, but their present location was as good as any to stay in.

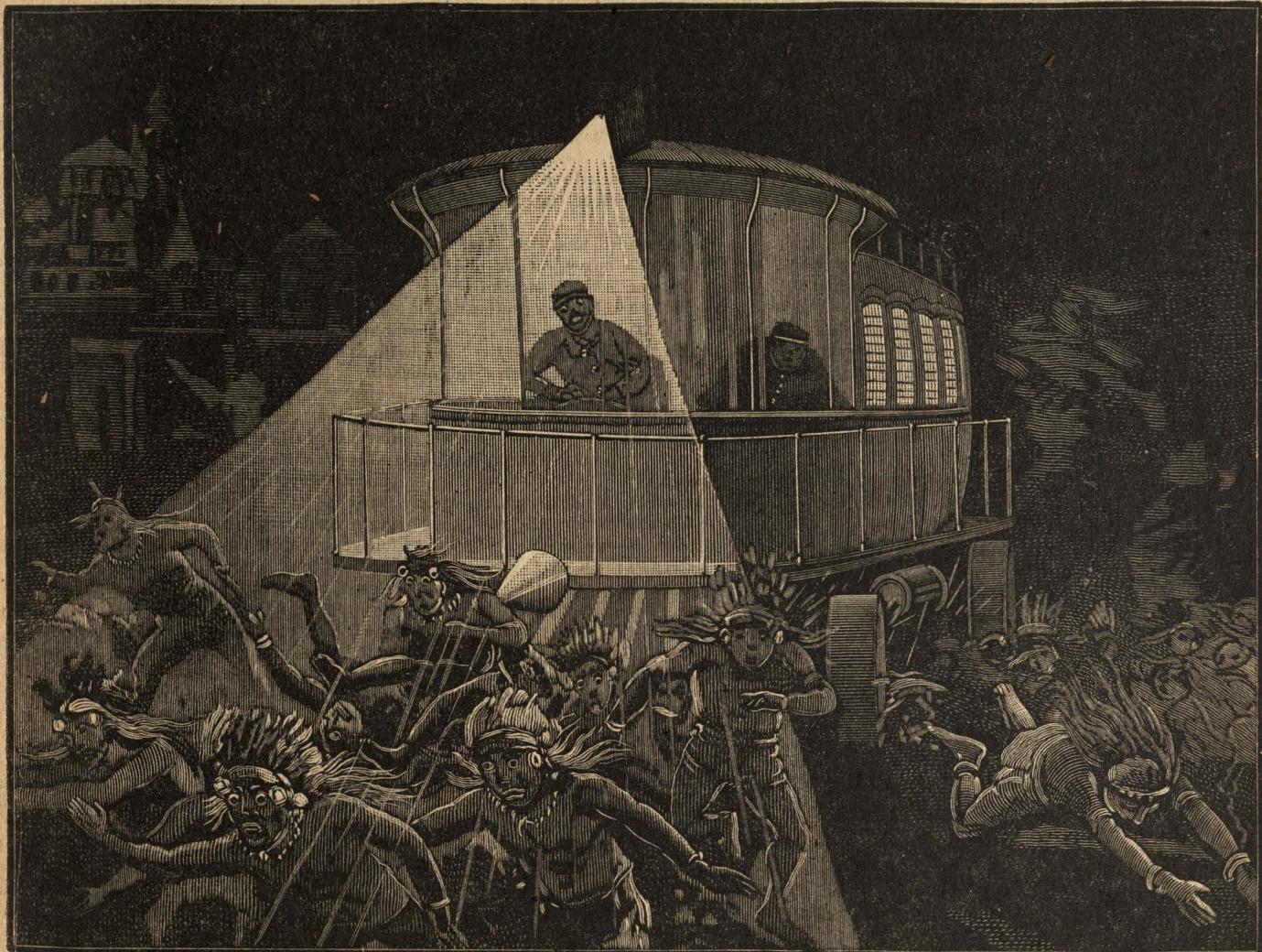
When he descended to the coach, he heard Pomp playing his banjo, and Barney was dancing a straight jig on a flat rock while the rest were playing cards.

He told them what he had seen, and then all hands set to work at repairing the damage to the coach.

Frank left the doctor laughing at their antics, and passed out of the canyon, intent upon reaching the summit of a lofty cliff that towered up some distance away, to a height of several hundred feet, presenting a wall as unbroken and smooth as glass.

It was a moonlight night, and the dense tropical foliage was resonant with the sounds of insects, as Frank plunged into the shrubbery, and began his steep climb up the rocky path that led to the precipice top.

As he was pushing his way through the



Along the central street tore the coach, everybody terrified at its fearful appearance, and Barney and Pomp laughed at their terror, watched everything they encountered, and listened for some token to guide them to their friends.

fires had been raging the night before, burning them down.

The waters of the lake were going down, although the surface was turbulent from boiling yet, as the internal fires in the earth heated it to a high degree, and while evaporating the lake in steam, it threatened to dry it up entirely.

The city of diamonds was out of sight.

Whether it was on the other side of the hill on the island, or buried in the debris from the volcano, Frank did not know.

He saw that the locality would be a long time cooling off sufficiently to admit of their inspecting it after the volcano subsided entirely, but as there was plenty hunting, trapping and fishing to be had in that vicinity, time was not likely to hang heavily upon their hands before they returned to the diamond city.

He then swept the glass around through the

The flying missiles had battered it all up, but nothing was broken, and by the afternoon, although the Whirlwind did not look as new as she did before, she had resumed her wanted appearance.

The delicate electric machinery was taken out and cleaned, the wheels, bearings and joints were oiled up, and by night-fall the coach was in perfect working order throughout.

"I think that will do," said Frank, when the finishing touches had been put on the work; and now I am off for a stroll. It is the only way I really rest my mind."

"Shall we start off to-morrow?" questioned the doctor.

"Yes. I want to explore this wilderness."

Barney and Pomp were making it unpleasant for Fitzgerald and his sweetheart by following them up mischievously, and keeping them from being alone, as they wished to, after the man-

tangled undergrowth he suddenly became aware that there was a flitting shadowy figure, not many yards away, going in the same direction.

"Hello—Barney, Pomp, doctor—is that you?" he called, pausing.

No reply was vouchsafed.

Frank keenly peered through the tangled vines.

The shadowy figure he had seen was now gone.

"Perhaps it was my own shadow," he muttered with a laugh.

The silvery rays of moonlight streaming down through the trees and bushes could have cast such a shadow, and as it seemed absurd to expect to meet anyone in such a lonely, un frequented place he accredited the shadow to the working of his imagination and went on.

By the time he reached the top of the cliff he

was out of breath and perspiring, for the climate he was in was intolerably hot.

There were no signs to be seen of the shadow up to then, but just as he was starting for the edge of the cliff which faced off at an angle from where he ascended, he fancied that he saw the figure of a man again, and paused.

It flitted across his path as swift and silent as a Will-o-the-Wisp, and vanished in the shrubbery as quickly as it appeared.

This time, however, Frank caught a better view of the object, and was assured that it was a man, and no shadow.

"Some stray Indian, maybe one of the Mexicans, or perhaps a giant who might have escaped destruction on the isle of diamonds!" he thought. "At any rate, the fellow is either following me or dodging me, and I'd like to find out which."

Frank had a pistol and a hunting knife in his belt.

He drew out the revolver, and fired a shot at the spot where the mysterious dodger had been lurking, with the hope of scaring him out of his covert, but no sound came back.

Frank replaced his pistol in his belt and went on.

"Whoever he is, he has escaped me," he thought, "but as he has made no hostile demonstrations yet I need not alarm myself. Still I'll keep a sharp lookout."

When Frank reached the edge of the cliff he glanced down the yawning abyss, and shuddered at the fearful gulf gaping below.

There was a flat table rock upon which he stood, that led to the very edge of the cliff, and he flung himself down upon it and bent an earnest glance upon the volcano and the diamond isle.

He saw the city from this great elevation.

It was leveled to the ground.

Not a solitary house stood in the place, and every dome, spire and turret had fallen in heaps of ruins; nothing in fact now remaining of the white city but a few broken pillars and walls, and a bed of dust covering the fallen debris several feet thick.

"It is the end of a thriving, ancient nation," Frank thought, "and beneath the fallen stones and pillars there now reposes nothing but a legion of bodies cold in the hands of death. How fearful and sudden their ending was, and what an army of souls death claimed at one fell swoop! Heaven, pity them!"

As the last words emanated from his lips he felt two hands thrust between his arms and body, saw one clutch his knife and the other his revolver, and as the weapons were torn from his belt, he made an effort to save them, but was not quick enough.

With a bound he was upon his feet.

He glanced around in back of himself and saw a man.

It was his shadow, no doubt.

The moonlight was streaming squarely down upon the fellow, and Frank saw that he was covered with his own revolver, while the knife was clutched in the stranger's left hand.

One glance at the fellow was enough for Frank.

"Frascuelo, the bandit!" he exclaimed, recognizing the man.

It was truly the burly Mexican, and he was aiming Frank's revolver at him, as if upon the point of firing.

"Senor," said he, with a dark smile crossing his ugly face, "we meet again, and this time I hold de winning hand!"

"You escaped the fate of your band?"

"Every man die like de dogs, *carramba*, but I can—"

"And the giants?"

"Dey all die too!"

"Are you going to fire at me?"

"Hold up de hands an' you see."

Frank raised his hands over his head, and with glistening eyes, the swarthy ruffian approached, him and added in malignant tones.

"I am going to kill you!"

"That is no more than I expected."

"Turn aroun', an' jump off de rocks."

"What! Leap down into the canyon?"

"Senor, dat is to be your fate!"

A feeling of intense horror took possession of Frank.

He saw that if he did not obey, Frascuelo would shoot him down like a dog in revenge for the trouble Frank caused him.

"Is there no alternative?" he asked coldly.

"None!" was the Mexican's remorseless reply.

Frank turned his back to his enemy, and stepped over to the brink of the chasm, with a cold feeling of despair.

He was alone, unaided, unarmed, and inevitably at Frascuelo's mercy, with death in two forms in front and in back of him.

He began to debate which was preferable.

"I count," said the Mexican cruelly. "Den you go, or get shot! One!"

"Which is the most merciful death?" thought Frank.

"Two!" continued Frascuelo as a diabolical grin stole over his face.

"God help me!" muttered Frank, bursting into a cold sweat.

"Three!" roared the Mexican taking steady aim at Frank's brain.

CHAPTER XXIII.

FOLLOWED BY A FLOOD.

FULL of fun as Barney and Pomp were, they had no idea that their practical joking, at the expense of Fitzgerald and Panchita, was going to end in a serious catastrophe.

The young Englishman was nettled at the manner in which the Irishman and the negro hung on to his heels, as he and his sweetheart made an effort to get away by themselves, to enjoy the seclusion of their own society.

Panchita had all the keen, ready wit of her sex, and was not long at discovering that the two old fellows were making them the butt of an innocent, but aggravating practical joke.

"Gerald," she whispered, as they got away from their two old tormentors for a moment. "Don't get angry at our friends, for they are only doing this for fun."

"But I don't enjoy it, don't you know," expostulated the young ranchman. "Really, a fellow can't get along without some privacy with is girl. It's a deuced shame, 'pon my word."

"Let us turn the tables on them, then."

"Ow, may I arsk. I'm at a loss, a beastly loss."

"Goodness me, where are your wits, you big goose?"

"Gone! Never 'ad any. Plan out a way to escape them, for 'Eavens sake."

"Let us go on up the ravine, to the lake at its end, which Mr. Reade said he had seen before he went away, and as there must be plenty shrubbery thereabouts, we can double on them, and steal back here to the coach. By turning the tables that way, we can leave them hunting for us there, while we are back here enjoying ourselves and laughing. It will teach them to let us be in future."

"By Jove, that is good! Come on. Blest if

I can—"

"Bedad it's jest as I wuz asaying afore," in-

terposed Barney, with a sly wink at Pomp, as he ranged up alongside of the exasperated young Englishman. "There's no law in Ireland fer ther Irish, an' begob that's why we have agitation an' ther loike."

"'Orrible! 'Orrible!" gasped Fitzgerald. "You people are never satisfied no matter what you 'ave, and that is the main reason your race is always in 'ot water be jove."

This sort of conversation did not flag all the way to the lake, Barney sticking like glue to his victim, so that he could not talk to his girl, and Pomp similarly engaged with Panchita.

The Mexican girl was as demure as a door mouse though, and when they came to the lake she said, quietly, to her tormentors:

"I would dearly love to have some of that fruit on the other side of the entrance to the ravine. Will you both go and get some for me, while I climb up this hill with Gerald?"

Always gallant, and willing to oblige a lady, the two sly rogues were willing to forego their teasing for a few moments, expecting to resume it on their return, and readily assented.

The canyon ended at a sort of hill, in which a lake of considerable dimensions was impounded, and out of which a small stream flowed through a mass of fallen trees, vines and mud, which had formed a natural flood gate near the top.

Had it not been for the rubbish the lake would have emptied itself into the canyon in the form of the stream that always had fed it.

On both sides of the hill was a dense growth of shrubbery, and the moment Barney and Pomp had their backs turned, the two scheming lovers darted into the concealment of the foliage, and stole back into the canyon, laughing heartily at their dupes.

Then, encompassed by the shadows on the gloomy side of the place, they made their way slowly back to the coach, now enabled to carry on the style of conversation and actions common in a case like theirs.

When Barney and Pomp returned with the fruit to where they had left Fitzgerald and Panchita, they missed them.

"Shiver me timbers, as ther sailors sez, if they ain't garn!" said Barney, all the grin taken out of his freckled face.

"Wha'-wha'-dat yo' say—done gwine?" exclaimed Pomp, letting the fruit fall to the ground in disgust.

"Shure an' it's ther fools we wor ter lave them. They've got on to our plan, so they have, an' it's ther schlip they've given us entoilery."

"It am yo' fault!" said Pomp, picking up his bananas.

"Divil a bit, it's yourn!" retorted Barney, finger-gering the mangoes.

"G'way dar, 'taint!"

"Go on wid yer, 'tis!"

"Taint!"

"Tis!"

"Give me none av yer lip."

"Doan' yo' git too sassy!"

Biff! went a mango in Pomp's eye.

Bang! went a banana on Barney's nose.

And the next instant they spit out their chargin by bombarding each other with the fruit until there was none of it left.

"Give me an ax," pleaded Barney.

"Somebuddy kill dis yere gorilla fo' me!" entreated Pomp.

"Dhroy up, ye spaldeen, it's a monkey yez be's after makin' av yerself, foighting wid a dacint indervidooal like me, whin ye might be better employed luckin' fer thim."

"Yo' spec Ise gwine ter gib up?" uttered Pomp, indignantly, as he gouged half a juicy mango out of his ear.

"Faix I'll foind 'em jest fer schpoite, if they're in them bushes, an' it's not a worrud they'll git in edgewoise," returned Barney, as he wiped a plug of ripe banana out of his eye.

Pomp pulled a hand grenade out of his pocket.

"Gosh amighty," said he, "wish dat I could make Fitzgerald sit down on dis like a trip-hammer, an' blow de coat-tails off his jacket fer gettin' de best ob us so neat."

"Then be heavens, it's ther chance yez have now ter git aven, shure."

"Wha' yo' mean, Barney?"

"Sling yer oye up there?"

"Whar?"

"Atop av ther sluiceway," said Barney, pointing up at the place where the debris allowed the little stream to trickle out of the lake, and run down through the gorge.

Pomp looked up.

"Doan' see nuffin'!" said he.

"Howly putty, can't ye say him lyin' there?"

"Sho' 'nough! Dare am Fitzy."

"Slaapin' on ther logs, ther baste, an' neglectin' his colleen."

On top of the log barrier they saw part of a man's body lying in the thick bushes, hiding the most of his figure.

A broad grin overspread Pomp's face, his enormous mouth opened, and a tremendous hole filled with white teeth was shown.

He uttered a suppressed chuckle, for he had an idea.

"See heah, Barney, will I scar' him inter a monkey fit?"

"That depinds upon whether yer can."

"Ise gwine ter frow dis bomb, aways below him, an' when it busts, yo' see a smarty tumble off dat log, an' come tumblin' down de hill, right in our arms again."

"Be the powers, I'm doyin' ter see it."

Pomp had extraordinary long arms, and enormous strength.

He drew back the grenade, and aimed at the logs below the man's figure, upon which it would easily explode.

Then he let it drive, with all his might.

The distance was long, and the bomb struck square on the logs.

There came a terrific explosion.

The bomb tore through the logs, rending a vast breach in them, tossing timber, bushes, dirt and stones high in the air, and the barricade of the water-course was torn to pieces.

A huge volume of water began to pour out through the enlarged aperture, and rushed down the hill into the canyon, while the two startled mischief-makers saw that the vast bulk of water in the lake was bound to tear the opening bigger.

That meant a flood!

Already the devastating work began.

Soon the whole barrier would be swept away, and thousands of tons of water would gush out, rush with maddening fury into the canyon, sweep down upon the coach and its passengers, and probably carry them all to destruction.

As Barney and Pomp realized this there sprang to the top of the fast bursting barrier the immense figure of a man.

Clearly outlined in the silvery moonlight, they saw that he was not Fitzgerald, as they supposed at first.

He was Isaac, the giant!

Like a mighty statue he stood there over the breaking logs, glancing down at the two scared men, and then, as the timber upon which he was gave away, down he was hurled into the seething waters, and vanished, engulfed in the

vines and logs, which might tear him to pieces.

"Isaac!" gasped Pomp, reeling back in terror.

"We've broke a dam!" said Barney in horror.

"An' de flood am a-comin', chile."

"Be heavens, it will wash away the coach an' our friends!"

"Den run! Run! Mebbe we kin git dar befo' de watah."

"It's fast breakin' up, is ther dam, an' it's a race fer life we'll be after havin'; but come on, an' be ther help av God we'll git ter ther coach before the hull barricade gives away!"

Away dashed Barney and Pomp into the canyon, imagining that Fitzgerald and Panchita were out of harm's way, up near the lake, and only fearing for the lives of Frank and the doctor.

They were fully half a mile from where the coach stood, and they ran like deer through the gorge, for they could hear the dam breaking behind them, the waters rushing with an awful rumble, and the logs crashing like thunder on the rocks.

The tiny stream was suddenly broadened, as the first influx of water entered the gorge and went rushing by them, and the sight of it caused them to augment their speed.

"Boom! boom! boom!" came the dull, heavy intonations behind them.

The coach was now only a short distance ahead, and as they glanced back over their shoulders, they saw a great wall of debris give away where the dam was.

Out poured a tremendous body of water.

It came hissing and roaring into the gorge in an immense wall, and the two desperate men knew that unless they got out of the other end of the canyon ere the water reached them, the flood would carry them off with it.

Not a soul was to be seen near the coach.

"Fitzgerald! Panchita!" shouted Pomp at the top of his voice.

"Frank! Docthor!" supplemented Barney, as loud as he could yell.

No reply save the echo of their voices was returned.

They did not pause, but sprang into the coach.

Already the wall of boiling, foamy water was half way through the canyon, coming on with maddening speed.

To grasp the lever, start the coach, and seize the wheel to guide it, was for Barney but the work of an instant.

Away dashed the Whirlwind in advance of the flood, which fairly choked up the ravine, and Barney gasped:

"Ther docthor must have garn out. Watch fer him, Pomp."

There was a wildly anxious look upon Pomp's face as he stood outside on the platform grasping the hand-rail, peering ahead for Vaneyke, and glancing shudderingly back at the avalanche of water that was racing after them.

What has become of the old professor?

They had not the faintest idea.

If he was overtaken by the flood, he would perish.

Frank, they suspected, was out of danger up in the hills.

With the speed of the wind the coach dashed on, but upon seeing that the roaring stream was fast overtaking them, Barney put on more power and they went faster.

The rough bed of the canyon was covered with rocks and stones that rattled and shook the coach, and Barney had the utmost difficulty in avoiding the boulders that lay in their path, less hands.

threatening to overturn the Whirlwind or break a wheel.

It was a terrible race for life, and the two anxious men were cast in a state of suspense that bordered on madness.

On, on, on—only a little further and then they would be safe.

But fate was against them, for the search light was not turned on.

With a rush the coach came upon a solitary tree that was standing athwart their path, and, although Barney tried to avoid it, the long, sharp ram over the cowcatcher struck it.

There came a terrible shock.

The ram was plunged into the tree trunk, splitting it, but not breaking it entirely, and the two were violently flung down.

The coach came to a pause, held there as firm as a rock, and Barney sprang to his feet and shut off power to stop the flying driving wheels, which were buzzing like fury and throwing up the dirt in clouds all around the coach.

The next instant the bellowing waters struck the coach and engulfed it, and the two men uttered a cry of terror!

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE MEETING OF THE GIANTS.

"Drop that pistol or you are a dead man!" It was a command uttered in tones that left no doubt of the speaker's stern determination to carry his meaning out.

Frascuelo gave a violent start and glanced around.

Behind him stood Dr. Vaneyke with a rifle up to his shoulder, his keen glance sweeping over the sights, and his finger upon the trigger ready to pull it at any instant.

A startled cry pealed from the swarthy bandit's lips, and he reeled back, turning deathly pale, and trembling like an aspen.

Frank felt a sudden thrill of joy.

He was just about to leap from the top of the cliff when the Mexican counted three, rather than get shot, when his intention was arrested by hearing the professor's welcome voice.

"Just in time!" he gasped, retreating a few steps.

The Mexican's murderous attempt at vengeance was foiled, and the dark look of malignant fury upon his face showed what a storm of evil passion there was raging in his brutal mind.

"Do not shoot!" he cried, in tones of terror.

"Then do as I tell you!" insisted the doctor, never swerving his weapon a hair's breadth, for he saw that he had the ugly bandit at his mercy, and meant to hold him so.

"No, no! I not will fire!" hastily assured Frascuelo.

"Why don't you drop the pistol, then?"

Frascuelo glanced at his revolver nervously, then at the rifle, and saw that he would fall a corpse just about one second before he could raise the weapon and sight it.

His face underwent the most horrible contortions, the muscles twitching convulsively, and the veins swelling on his forehead and temples until it seemed as if they would burst.

Much as he hated to find himself thwarted and forced to obey the doctor, he had to let the revolver fall to the ground.

"Dere!" he snarled, with a satanic glare at the cool doctor. "I hope you satisfied now, senor. Lower de rifle."

"Not yet!" coolly replied Vaneyke. "First drop that rifle too."

"Carramba! I not can do."

"Drop it, as you value your life!"

Down went the rifle from Frascuelo's nerve-

He did it with a poor grace, and Frank's pale face resumed its natural color, and he laughed at his enemy's discomfort.

"Now you let me go, señor," growled the bandit, uneasily.

"Take that pistol from your sash and drop it with the other."

"*Por dios!* Dis is hard—hard—hard!" groaned Frascuelo.

"I know it hurts your pride, but you have got to do it."

Frascuelo drew his own big navy revolver, and muttering an expletive, in his ill humor, he violently hurled it to the ground.

"Next, the long dagger I see peeping out of your sash!" the doctor went on, in decided tones, as he noticed the weapon.

Frascuelo began to savagely grumble, and a dogged look crossed his face for a moment, as if he was going to resist.

"I must have something!" he snarled.

"Out with it!" said the doctor, with a frown.

Frascuelo laid his trembling hand on the haft, and withdrew it, his black eyes blazing like live coals of fire, and he gnashed his teeth and hurled the knife down with the pistol.

He was then entirely weaponless.

His fury knew no bounds, and his fingers began to work spasmodically, and he crouched back as though he would have liked to spring at the doctor and tear him limb from limb.

"Now I have nothing!" he cried, in suppressed, trembling tones.

"Then hold up your hands over your head."

The bandit obeyed.

"Retreat a few paces!" was Vaneyke's next order.

Frascuelo did so, meantime glancing longingly at the weapons.

"Frank," said the doctor, when he saw that the bandit was well out of the way, "you had better take those weapons."

"Doctor, I would have perished only for you," said Frank, as he took possession of the two pistols and hunting knives.

"What shall we do with this chap?" asked Vaneyke.

"As we don't want to be bothered with him in the coach, and he will consummate more mischief if we allow him to roam about, the best thing we can do with the brute is to tie him here to a tree with his sash, and let him run chances of some friend coming along to liberate him," replied Frank.

"That, then, shall be his fate!"

"Mercy! No! Mercy! I will die!" yelled Frascuelo, in horror.

"The sooner the better," coldly replied Frank.

"Starve!"

"People have lived forty days without food."

"De wolves—de vultures—"

"You don't want your bones picked, eh?"

"Release me, an' I go away—far off—to Mexico, and never return."

"You have been proven such a terrible liar I don't believe you."

"But I swear it by de holy cross—by my mother's ashes—"

"Both of which oaths are rank perjuries. Doctor, hold him up until I take off his sash and tie him. If he tries to do any dirty work let him have a ball through the head."

In utter despair and anguish of spirit Frascuelo groaned aloud.

He dared not offer the slightest resistance, and the wild hope sprang up in his bosom that being made a prisoner would give him a longer lease of life than to get shot, and in the interval some good fortune might lead to his liberation.

Consequently he did not say any more when Frank unwound several folds of his sash from

around his waist, and standing him up against a tree, tied him there securely.

"His claws are nipped now," said Frank, when his task was completed, "and if he can manage unaided to get away from this lashing he must be a magician."

"How did he happen to get the drop on you, Frank?" the doctor asked as he lowered his rifle.

The inventor explained the case.

"I left Fitzgerald and Panchita in the coach laughing over some joke they played on Barney and Pomp," said Vaneyke, when our hero finished his story, "and came after you for a quiet little chat over our future movements, when I saw what was transpiring."

Just then the sullen roar of the flood down in the canyon reached their ears, startling them, and caused them to glance at each other.

"Hark! What is that?" muttered Frank anxiously.

"It sounds like water," replied the doctor, involuntarily glancing toward the active volcano as if half expecting that it had something to do with the strange noise.

"And it is down in the canyon," said Frank, striding to the edge of the cliff and peering over.

The scene that then met his view wrung a startled cry from his lips, which brought the doctor to his side.

"See! See! The dam above the canyon at the lake has given way, Vaneyke, and a terrible flood is pursuing the coach, in which I can see Barney and Pomp racing for their lives."

"Where are Fitzgerald and the girl?" hastily asked the doctor.

"They must be inside of the coach."

He was mistaken.

They were not in the coach.

In fact, they were not in the canyon.

Soon after the doctor left the Whirlwind, they had gone out together, leaving it standing alone as Barney and Pomp had found it.

"Oh!" exclaimed Frank, as the ram on the coach struck a tree and the avalanche burst over the Whirlwind. "They are lost!"

Forgetting Frascuelo in the excitement of the moment, they went dashing down the steep hill toward the canyon through the dense foliage, and when they reached the bottom they saw that the canyon was flooded.

The coach was buried in the rushing water, but Barney and Pomp had crawled up through the trap-door onto the roof, and stood clinging to the railing, their bodies half inundated.

Had it not been for the railing the swift current would have swept them away; indeed, it was then a hard job for them to retain their position, for the tree trunks and other debris carried along by the current caromed against them every few moments, and the blows were so hard as to nearly throw them in the water.

The doctor and Frank had taken up a position on a rock overhanging the water, and the coach stood at least fifty feet away from them.

"Barney!" shouted Frank.

The Irishman and the negro looked up at him.

"Save us!" shouted Shea. "Begorra, we're dhrownin'!"

"Don't joke with me."

"Nixy joke, bedad. If ther wather comes up hoigher we're garn."

"It is subsiding and not rising."

"Then we ain't dhrownin' an' don't warn'ter be saved, begob."

"Where are the ranchman and the girl?"

"Sorra's the bit I know."

"Weren't they in the coach with you?"

"No, an' it's glad I am they wasn't."

"Dey mus' be hidin' in de bushes up by de lake," said Pomp.

"Is that where you left them last?"

"H'm, h'm."

"How did the dam happen to break?"

"Specs it done busted," replied Pomp with a perfectly innocent air, for he was not going to confess that he had blown it open with a hand grenade, for fear of Frank censuring him.

There was no way for Frank to reach his two friends, and they could not go over to the rock unless they swam over.

"You had better stay where you are, though," said Frank as they debated the question awhile, "for I want to keep the coach located. The water in the lake will soon all run out, and then the flood will end. It is spreading all over the country as it goes out of the canyon, and will run down the hill to the lake that surrounds the isle of diamonds. Already it is subsiding, as I told you."

Frank felt anxious about the fate of the missing couple.

"Shall I go up where Frascuelo was left, and peer over the edge of the cliff for some sign of them?" asked Vaneyke.

"I wish you would," returned Frank.

The doctor said no more, but hurried away, and Frank was about to turn his attention again to his friends, when the bushes beside the rock he stood on parted, and to his utter amazement he saw Isaac emerge from the water.

The colossal giant was drenched and panting.

Evidently he had been swimming with the tide.

He paused doubtfully as his blue eyes rested upon Frank, and seemed to be hesitating whether to advance or not.

The inventor beckoned to him.

"Come over here, Isaac!" he exclaimed in Spanish.

"What would you have of me?" queried the giant.

"Nothing now. Since we are in the same trouble, we cannot afford to be enemies any longer. I do not know how it happens that you are in this situation, but I pity your distress."

Isaac's face had a haggard look, his eyes burned and sparkled with a feverish glare pitiful to see, and it seemed as if he was fairly crushed and spirit broken by the weight of his woe.

He strode forward impulsively, and grasped Frank's outstretched hand with such a change of countenance that it seemed as if a ray of sunshine had swept the clouds away.

"God bless you, my friend," said he emotionally, "for you are a true man. We will forget and forgive the past. I owe the downfall of my nation to one man. I mean Frascuelo. It is my duty to search every corner of the earth for him, to avenge my people."

Just then the doctor returned in hot haste, burst through the bushes, and ere he saw the giant, he exclaimed:

"Frascuelo is free. Liberated. He is pursuing me and—"

But just then the Mexican bandit appeared in back of the doctor, who had gone up on the cliff without a weapon.

The bandit paused upon seeing Frank and Isaac.

He had managed to untie his bonds.

"The murderer!" exclaimed Isaac, passionately, his eyes flashing with a dangerous look as he beheld his enemy.

And with one spring he was in front of the Mexican.

They were both enormously powerful men,

and a battle between them for life promised to be a terrible conflict.

Instantly apprehending his danger Frascuelo leaped back, uttering a startled exclamation, and turning around with the utmost rapidity, he plunged into the bushes and fled.

Frank raised his pistol to fire at the wretch, when Isaac arrested the action by lifting his hand, and exclaiming:

"No! Leave him to me! He shall never escape me alive."

"As you please," returned Frank, lowering his weapon.

"Farewell! We shall meet again!" exclaimed Isaac in prophetic tones. When we do, the ruins of my once magnificent city shall be yours. I go to do my duty!"

He waved his hand to Frank and the doctor, and as a set look of intense hatred clouded his face, he dashed into the bushes in pursuit of the Mexican bandit to kill him.

CHAPTER XXV.

RESCUED FROM THE RAIL.

WHEN the light of day dawned, the flood was ended, and the coach was liberated from the tree into which the ram was stuck.

The Whirlwind had not suffered any evil consequence from its submersion, excepting that the interior arrangements were drenched.

Frank, the doctor, Barney and Pomp scoured the surrounding neighborhood for some signs of Fitzgerald and his girl, but in vain, for they had vanished, leaving no trace of their whereabouts.

The four friends finally had to come to the disagreeable conclusion that they perished in the flood.

"We will at least search for their bodies," said Frank, when breakfast was partaken of in the coach, "and if we find them, all we can do is to give them a decent burial."

The Whirlwind was started.

They followed the course taken by the flood when it spread out upon leaving the canyon, and although the whole day was spent, not a sign of them was found.

When night fell again, they gave up the search in despair and resolved to leave the valley by the eastward, and not come back until the action of the volcano ceased, and the Isle of Diamonds cooled off enough to let them approach it comfortably.

While up on the elevation, Frank had located every point of which he could make use, and, therefore, knew in which direction to go.

"We will head for Tabasco," said Frank to the rest. "It must be within one hundred miles of where we now are located, and I can get some chemicals I need there, as the water spoiled what I had. By the time we return it is likely that this place will look different."

"We can do absolutely nothing about the Isle of Diamonds now," said the doctor. "Everything is too hot."

"Isaac made a strange remark to me. He said that when we meet again, the ruins of the Diamond city were to be mine."

"His race wiped out, he is now a disconsolate wanderer over the face of the earth," said the doctor, "and as he knows that he will soon have no use for the vast treasures buried in the ruins of the fallen city, he probably means to let you have them."

"It was as I suspected," returned Frank, thoughtfully, "and should it prove so, after all, our journey here shall not be in vain, but we will bring the coach home laden with jewels of the first water to reward us for our efforts."

On the following day the coach was over seventy-five miles from the four mountains, going

over a level plain at an easy rate of speed, and all hands began to feel more cheerful at the prospect of once again getting into civilization.

The scene of their recent exploits was so fraught with terrible memories that they were glad to get away from it for awhile.

It was late in the afternoon when they reached a small settlement on the railroad that runs from Minatitlan to Tehuantepec, and thence to the Gulf, where it ended at El Carmen.

There were not many inhabitants in the place, but the few who were there were crowded in the public square around a man who was selling a magnificent horse to the highest bidder.

At the railroad depot stood a train of cars east bound, taking on a load of milk and garden truck, the engine, freight car and passenger car being small and old-fashioned, as is the case on most of the Mexican short lines.

The coach came to a pause near the railroad, outside of the village, and Frank alighted and passed down through the main street, intent upon questioning somebody as to the nearest trail to Tabasco.

He came upon the crowd around the man in the square, and peering through the mass of heads he was amazed to see that the fellow who was attracting attention was Frascuelo.

Frank elbowed his way through the crowd. In a moment he stood before his arch enemy and their glances met.

"Frascuelo!"

"Reade!"

Those were their exclamations.

Then their revolvers leaped into view.

The crowd scattered.

Bang!

Bang!

Two reports rang out.

Frank remained uninjured.

Frascuelo staggered and fell.

"I am killed!" he gasped.

"Good enough!" was Frank's comment.

He walked up to his enemy.

Frascuelo was wounded, but not dying.

He was merely shamming a fatal wound.

As soon as Frank was near enough, he raised his pistol.

"Die! die!" the dark faced wretch hissed, taking deadly aim.

"Treachery!" muttered Frank.

He was dismayed, but did not lose his wits.

With one kick he sent the revolver flying from the Mexican's hand.

Before he could seize upon Frascuelo, he bounded to his feet, and rushed over to the railroad depot, behind which he ensconced himself ere Frank could fire another shot.

"He shall not escape me that way!" muttered Frank.

And so saying, he ran over to the depot after the bandit.

The whole populace of the village had sought shelter within their hovels by this time, fearful of getting shot.

Frank made a circuit of the depot.

But his enemy was nowhere near it.

Glancing around, the inventor saw that there was no place where Frascuelo could hide, unless it were on the train of cars.

"That is where he must be," thought Frank. "I'll search them."

Just then the bell on the locomotive rang.

The machinery began to steam and hiss, and the train started.

Frank boarded the passenger car.

It was full of people, but the one he sought was not there.

Passing on the freight-car, he found no evidence of the Mexican.

Nothing remained but the locomotive and its small tender.

Thinking that his enemy might be in either Frank went over on the tender, and just as he reached the coal bunker he heard a cry.

It was suddenly stifled.

The tones were evidently those of a female. Frank hastily glanced around and leaped into the tender.

There he received a shock of amazement.

"Panchita!" he gasped. "She is Frascuelo's prisoner!"

The girl was bound hand and foot, and lay in the tender, but just as Frank boarded it he saw Frascuelo lifting the girl, and holding her with one arm, he rushed toward the engine cab.

In his right hand he clutched a revolver.

"Off! Off!" he yelled, aiming at the fireman. "A madman!" gasped that scared individual. "Leave the cab!" ordered Frascuelo, as he boarded the engine.

"Directly!" returned the fireman, and he leaped to the ground.

Frascuelo glanced back and saw Frank preparing to fire at him.

It made the ugly rascal start, and he suddenly screened his body with that of the half fainting girl, and shouted, defiantly:

"Fire, and you will shoot your own friend!"

"Coward!" contemptuously cried Frank, lowering his weapon.

"Put on full speed, you accursed dog!" fiercely growled the bandit, turning his lurid glance upon the frightened engineer.

The man dared not disobey nor desert his post, as the lives of all hands on the train were at his mercy.

He gradually did as he was ordered, and Frascuelo's face lighted up with a smile as he saw the coupling-pin in easy reach.

He caught hold of the chain that held it.

With one jerk he drew it out.

The locomotive leaped away from the tender and cars, and with a rush it left them far behind, Frank still on the tender.

"He will escape—he has outwitted me!" muttered Frank.

For an instant he did not know what to do.

The cars were going slowly along from the impetus the engine had given them, and just then arrived near where the electric coach stood containing Frank's friends.

"Ah, the Whirlwind!" muttered Frank. "I'll jump off, and pursue the runaway locomotive with her. I am sure we can overtake the engine, and wrest Frascuelo's captive from him."

Wondering where Fitzgerald was, Frank leaped to the ground.

The coach stood only a short distance away, and as Frank ran for it and got on board, he shouted to the rest:

"Get ready for a race after that engine, boys."

"What's the matter, Frank?" queried the doctor, following him into the pilot-house, where he was turning the lever to start the coach, and grasping the wheel. "Has anything unusual happened?"

"Frascuelo has Panchita a captive on that locomotive."

"By Jove! You don't say!"

"I was after him, and he uncoupled the cars, leaving me behind."

"And you are going to run after him?"

"We can overhaul the locomotive with ease," replied Frank, as he sent the coach spinning off in pursuit of the engine, over a level plain through which the tracks were laid. "I doubt if yonder little engine can make more than thirty or forty miles an hour under high pressure, while we can do seventy-five."

"Was Fitzgerald with them?" asked Vaneyke.

"No; I don't know what has become of him." Barney and Pomp busied themselves with the machinery, seeing that everything was in order, and the coach shot ahead like a meteor in pursuit of the flying locomotive.

Slowly but gradually the Whirlwind began to overhaul the engine, and within ten minutes it ranged up to it.

Frank ran it alongside the caboose.

Inside stood Frascuelo, aiming his pistol at the engineer's head, and upon the floor laid Panchita unable to move.

There was a look of woe on the bandit's face, upon seeing with what ease the electric coach overhauled the engine.

He suddenly aimed at Frank, whose figure he could see through the glass front of the pilot house, but ere he could pull the trigger, down slid the protecting screen over the whole turret, and the ball was flattened against the woven steel netting.

Barney drew a bead upon the wretch from a window in the coach, and fired a shot that would have ended Frascuelo's career, if the coach had not swayed just then, spoiling his aim.

But the ball struck him.

Dr. Vaneyke grasped the wheel, and Frank darted out on the platform, just as Barney wounded the Mexican.

It had been Frank's intention to jump on the locomotive, and fight the bandit, in order to get the girl away from him.

Now, however, there was no need of doing so. Frascuelo had fallen back against the wall,

and as the doctor kept the coach running close to and even with the cab, Frank reached over the railing, and seizing hold of Panchita, he lifted her off the engine onto the Whirlwind. This was hardly done when Vaneyke uttered a warning cry.

"Look out, Frank, I must stop the coach!" was his cry.

"What is the matter, doctor?"

"Glance ahead there!"

As the doctor spoke he shut off power, put on the brake, and twisting the wheel he sent the coach off at an angle with the tracks.

Frank saw that in one minute more the coach would have dashed into a swamp through which the tracks were laid.

But our hero had the girl from the cab.

As the coach and the engine parted company Frascuelo waved his hand defiantly to them, for although they had rescued the girl he had been able to make his escape.

Cutting Panchita's bonds, Frank went inside with the weeping girl.

"In the name of Heaven, how came you here in Frascuelo's power?" he asked.

"A few words will explain all," returned the frightened girl, to the four who were now all in the pilot-house with her. "We left the coach in the gorge, Gerald and I, and strolled up in the hills. There we came to a natural cavern in the rocks. In front of it we encountered Frascuelo. He knocked Gerald senseless, and

thrust me in the cave with him. There he bound me hand and foot."

"Where is Fitz now?" asked Frank.

"Still lying in the cave?"

"Without food or water?"

"Yes—starving to death."

"Go on with your story."

"I was tied up, too. He went away. Some time later he came back weaponless and without his red sash. He was in a rage and said he would avenge the injuries our party did him. Leaving Gerald lying there helpless to starve to death, he carried me away, saying he had eluded Isaac who had been on his trail."

"Yes—we know when the giant pursued him. Go ahead."

"He had a horse tethered some distance off, mounted with me and rode night and day until he reached a little town only an hour ago. There he secretly thrust me in the coal bunker of an engine while he strove to sell his horse, and—and well, you know the rest."

"And do you mean to say that poor Fitzgerald has been lying over two days in that cavern without food or drink, helplessly bound hand and foot?" asked Frank.

"It is indeed so," replied Panchita, bursting into tears.

"Then, by heavens, if he is not already dead, we have no time to waste returning to him to set him free."

"Do so, in Heaven's name," entreated the girl, pathetically, "and you may arrive in time to save him."

"Then we're off, for life or death, to poor Fitzgerald, boys," cried Frank, and he put on power and grasped the wheel.

Away dashed the coach over the plain at full speed.

It was a desperate race for the unlucky man's life, but if there was a chance to save him Frank would do it.

[END OF PART I.]

The continuation and conclusion of this story can be found in the FRANK READE LIBRARY, No. 59, entitled "FRANK READE, JR., AND HIS ELECTRIC COACH; or, THE SEARCH FOR THE ISLE OF DIAMONDS," By "Noname." Part II.

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